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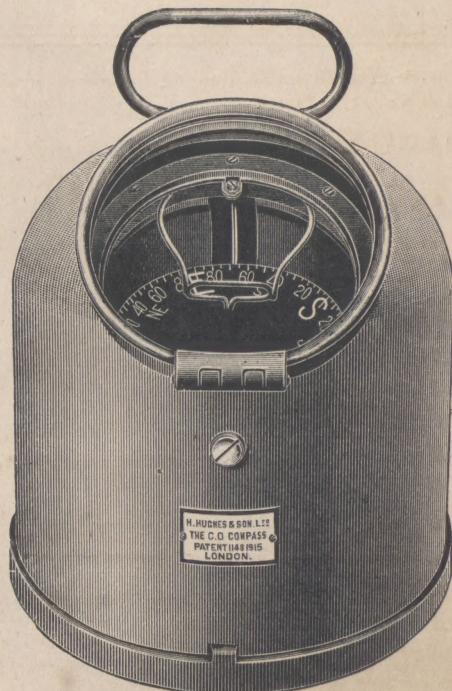
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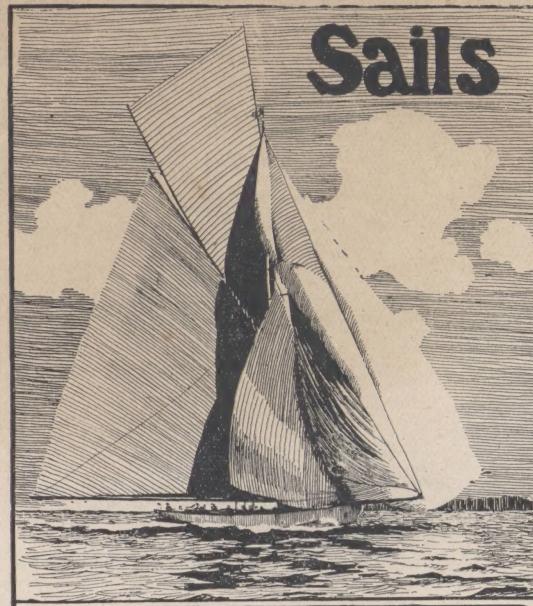
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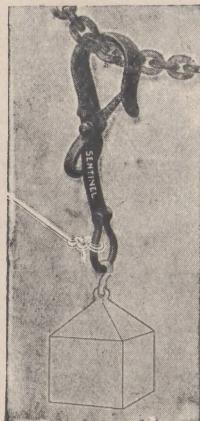


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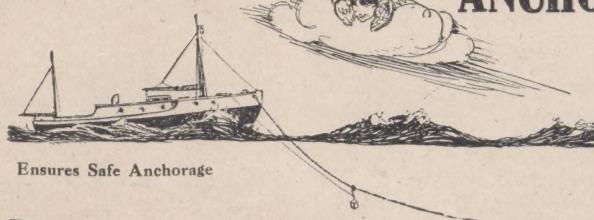
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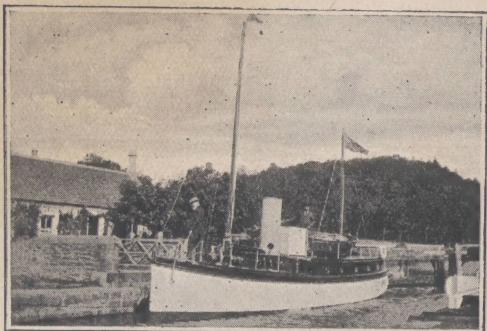
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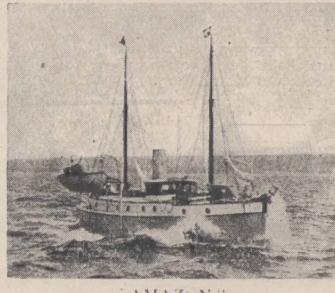
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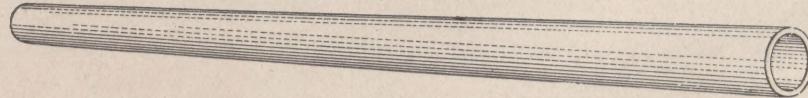
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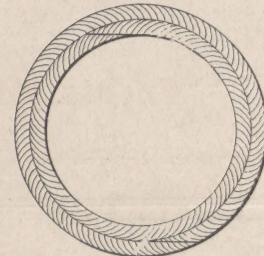
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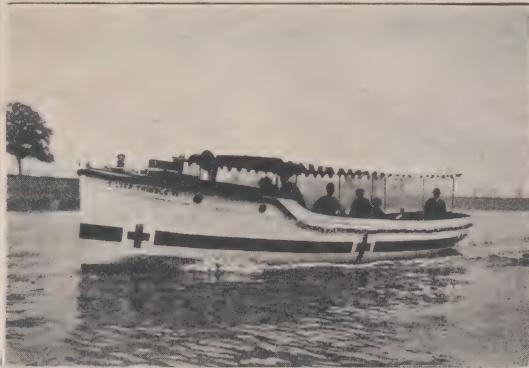
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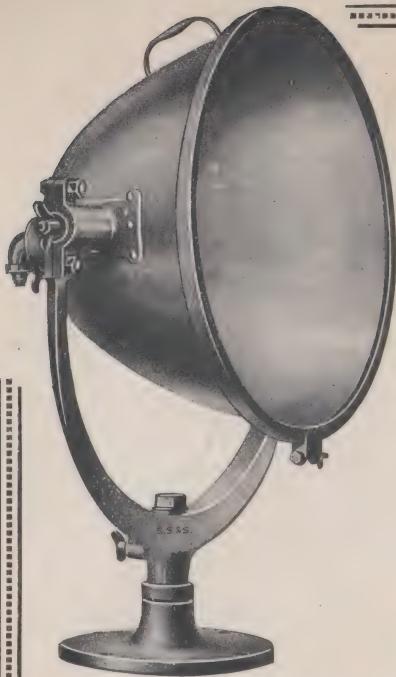
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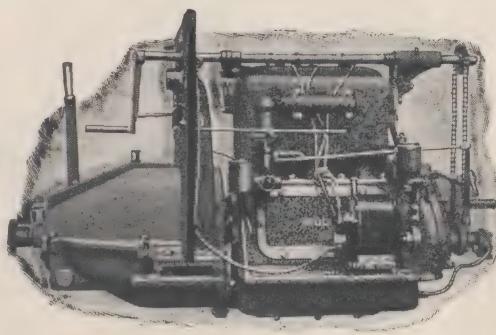
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THE
YACHTING
MONTHLY
& MARINE MOTOR MAGAZINE

No. 136.
Vol. XXIII.

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COMMANDER PHILIP HERBERT

THE

YACHTING MONTHLY

AND MARINE MOTOR MAGAZINE

No. 136.—VOL. XXIII.]

[AUGUST, 1917.

Our Portrait Study

COMMANDER PHILIP HERBERT, R.N.V.R.

THREE are few more deservedly popular officers in the R.N.V.R. than Commander Philip Herbert, for long before we thought of war we knew and recognised him as a practical sailor—one who knew the game and played it in the proper spirit. For there are, we know, yachtsmen *and* yachtsmen, and none fail to recognize and appreciate the man who loves the sport and knows it from A to Z. And men who have come to know him in this new and later sphere welcome his appearance, for he is essentially one of ourselves, bred in the traditions of the sea as we know and love it. A straight dealing man devoid of trimmings he can understand the difficulties of those who come under war discipline with little but an abounding enthusiasm and a readiness to put their practical wits at the disposal of the country. In the earlier stages of the war Commander Philip Herbert gained an enviable reputation in the Northern Patrol, both by reason of his ability to handle his ships and those who served with him—a heterogeneous crew scattered in many units of the hastily collected fleet of the early patrol. The work was well and faithfully performed, and if many a reputation found an early grave in the coastal waters of these Islands before perfection of personnel and material was possible, more were made and established in these strenuous days. Some day we shall know the work these men performed. Sufficient now that they remain with the reins which they voluntarily took hold of when war drew upon our resources of men of capacity.

For many years Commander Herbert took a great interest in racing in the larger classes, and he assisted the late Mr. Myles Kennedy in the handling of White Heather in the 19-metre class. He was, however, a master of craft and the owner of several successful boats which he invariably kept in the pink of condition. One of the first was a sturdy little 9-ton yawl, The Grayling. He also owned the steam yacht Warrior, but steam had few attractions for him, and a 20-ketch Chameleon, now called Meander, carried his flag for several years, to be replaced by the beautiful Fife 20-ton Chameleon, a boat which he had built at Fairlie and fitted with an auxiliary motor. Other craft he has owned and sailed round and about his home port of Plymouth, where he holds the rank of Vice-Commodore of the Royal South Western Yacht Club. He belongs to the Royal Cruising Club, and holds one of its best cruising records. Of many other clubs he is a member, and few Western Regattas find him an absentee. In 1906 he was elected a member of the Yacht Racing Association.

WET WORK



M.L.'S DRIVING AGAINST A HEAD SEA.

Drawn by Lieut. N. S. Carr. R.N.V.R.



GIPSIES OF THE SEA

BY

"BARTIMEUS"

THE 4th of August, 1914, probably found the Yachtsmen of Great Britain less unprepared for war with Germany than any other civilian community in the Empire.

Men turn to the sea as a profession for a variety of reasons; but the amateur yachtsman embraced the sea as a mistress with a complete and very genuine passion. To those who seek her thus, the sea has much to tell; she will whisper a thousand secrets 'twixt dusk and dawn to the little ships resting snug in her curlew-haunted creeks, or riding lazy to a long cable in the lee of desolate sand-banks—things denied to the busy wayfarer on her wide thoroughfares.

Yachtsmen as a class are meditative folk. A man who spends his week-ends alone, or in the company of one other in a three-ton yacht, has opportunities for reflection denied to the devotees of other pursuits. He learns more than the ways of the tides and Primus stoves.

In the queer, uneasy tranquility of the decade before the war there came in gradually increasing numbers to our East and South-East coasts an unobtrusive visitor. Few people encountered him, because he chose sequestered places to visit, but the Yachtsman met him: talked much with him: and afterwards sat in the cuddy and smoked many pipes, thinking

about him and his unholy thirst for information.

There were other yachtsmen, of a more restless and inquiring turn of mind, who went further afield with lead-line and compass, "observing 'ow the world was made." Where the short yellow seas stumbled across leagues of shoals, and windmills and the brown sails of barges

Then, with the red dawn of the 4th of August, 1914, came War at last, and the Yachtsman pulled a deep breath of something like relief, knocked out the ashes of his pipe, and went ashore, forbearing to say "I told you so" to the harassed Whitehall officials he went in search of. This was a war of the Sea, and the Yachtsman clewed up his business



M. L.'S LINE AHEAD: STERN VIEW.

broke the sky-line above low-lying sand-hills, they learned and saw many things. One even wrote a book about these things,* that he who ran might read. The trouble was that people ashore entrusted with the destinies of Empire were running about so busily that they hadn't time to read. They were catching votes and such like, as children snatch at falling leaves in Autumn. So the Yachtsman carried on yachting and cultivating the acquaintance of the slow-speaking, slow-moving skippers of the coastwise traffic and the crab-gaited community that manned the East Coast fishing craft. Useful men to know sometimes at the pinch of a sudden crisis.

ashore, sent his wife to stay with her mother, and placed all his knowledge of the coasts of Northern Europe and the seas between them at the disposal of the Navy.

Now the Navy was very busy. Like the Yachtsman, it had not been altogether blind to signs and portents, because the sea is a wonderful conductor of electricity—and other things. But it had its own theories on Naval Warfare: among others it opined that, properly speaking, this was an affair of big ships and frequent battles. To fight battles you require dexterity in the use of weapons—highly scientific and technical weapons at that. They themselves had been learning to wield these weapons since they were twelve years old or thereabouts. The Yachtsman's acquaintance with lethal arms was limited to a

* *The Riddle of the Sands.*

12-bore scatter-gun and a revolver, with which he enlivened Sunday afternoons becalmed by potting at empty bottles.

"Just wait till we've mopped up these fellows in the North Sea," said the Navy; "It won't take long: and then we'll talk things over, old chap."

So the Yachtsman waited, and after a while the Navy found itself waiting, be-

They messed together in cheerful communism, save when they found themselves under the immediate observation of the brass-bound Navy. Then they grew self-conscious and the Captain fed in splendid isolation: the deck-hand, who was his next-door neighbour in Surbiton and owned a bigger yacht, touched his cap when he spoke and called him "sir."



M.L.'S LINE AHEAD: BOW VIEW.

cause the fellows in the North Sea had retired to Kiel, thumped their chests and said they were waiting too. Thus modern Naval warfare developed from glowing theory into rather wearisome fact.

The Yachtsman had not been altogether idle in the meanwhile. He manned every available motor-boat in the kingdom, and patrolled the coast under the White Ensign with a rifle and a rather complicated signalling apparatus. When the supply of motor-boats ran out, the wealthier yachtsmen built their own, fitted them out at their own expense and manned them. They manned them indiscriminately: one was a captain, another was a deck-hand, and yet another club-mate, the engineer. It mattered not a whit how or where a man served as long as the spray was in their faces and the dawn came up out of their beloved sea.

The Navy noted these things and smiled—not derisively, but with affection, as men smile at dogs and children. But it was also keenly observant: it was taking the measure of these enthusiastic amateurs, without undue haste, deliberately, parting reluctantly with ancient prejudice and shibboleth. This is the Navy's way.

The motor-boats did their work consistently well and without ostentation. They conducted an efficient examination service among the teeming coast-wise traffic of the South-East coast, through which not a needle could have been smuggled in a bargeload of hay: this was a duty for which the Yachtsman was admirably suited. It required tact, for the pre-war coaster was a touchy fellow and accustomed to keep himself to himself: furthermore, it called for intimate

co-operation with the Custom officers of coast and estuary ports; but these the Yachtsmen had known and drunk a pot of beer with any time during the past five-and-twenty years.

The motor-boats found themselves shepherding wayward fishing fleets out of forbidden waters suddenly hedged about with incomprehensible prohibitions: they guarded them on their lawful occasions and, because they knew them and their fathers before them, knew also when to caution wrong-doers and when to confiscate nets and sails. This, it may be remarked in passing, is a wisdom not learned in paths ashore nor yet in the training colleges of the Navy. They served as tenders to the big ships and towed targets for the smaller one. They brought battle-cruisers their love-letters, and acquired both skill and cunning in sinking floating-mines with rifle-fire.

Thus, in due course, was their probation accomplished. The Navy had observed it all, mostly without comment or eulogy. But when the time was ripe it produced a standardised type of motor patrol boat, armed and equipped in all respects as little men-of-war.

"Now," said the Navy to the Yachtsman, "Shake hands as one of us, and then suffer us to train you for a little while—even to putting you wise about depth charges and Hotchkiss guns—ere you have your heart's desire."

The Yachtsmen leant an ear to the Navy Staff Instructors (wise men from a torpedo school called the "Vernon") with eager willingness. "But where," asked the Navy, "are the rest of you? There aren't enough to go round the boats we've ordered."

The Yachtsmen, labouring at applied mechanics and the true inwardness of high-explosive bombs, said nothing. There had been a time when their numbers would have more than sufficed for all the country's needs. But some were lying under the sandy soil of Gallipoli, or the marshes of Flanders, and others were whittling model yachts out of bits of wood in Dutch internment camps: the roll of honour in well-nigh every yacht club in the kingdom supplied the answer. The matter was not one for either cavil or regret. A man can die but

once, and so long as he dies gloriously the region of discussion as to his whereabouts is passed.

Then came the oversea gipsies to fill the vacant places of those of their brethren who had finished their last long trick. From Auckland, Sydney and Winnipeg they came: from Vancouver, Wellington, Toronto and Montreal. They were strangers to Crouch and Solent, but the Yachtsmen of England welcomed them into the mysterious indissoluble free-masonry of all sea-lovers, which under the White Ensign is called to-day the R.N.V.R.

Now, of their achievements in the Motor Boat Patrol worthier pens than mine have written. They have endured monotony—which is the lot of many in modern war—and, what is more difficult, have maintained their efficiency and enthusiasm throughout. They perform duties which are in no way connected with glory in any shape or form, and have been content to wait their turn for greater things with willing cheerfulness. And some have attained that glory, buying it lightly at the price of life.

Thus far we have attempted to record the doings of the small Yachtsman—by your leave the truest of all sea-gipsies. But there were others, owners of ocean-going steam-yachts and Atlantic Cup racers, whose experience of the sea differed little from that of the rugged professional. These, on the outbreak of war, proceeded to the nearest dockyard demanding guns and men who could shoot them, in the King's name. They got the guns and the men, and they reinforced the trawler patrol and examination service from the Shetlands to the Lizard. When it is remembered that few of these gallant sportsmen possessed masters' "tickets": that 300-ton yachts are not built to keep the seas in winter off the outer Hebrides, and yet kept them: when the number of losses and groundings during the period they were commanded by amateurs is compared with the subsequent tale of their achievements under the professional seamen who succeeded them—then some true insight into the value of the deep-sea yachtsmen's work will be obtained.

This is not the time to recount in detail the performances of the individual or his

yacht. The Navy knows them, but the Navy, according to its wont, is silent. Some day, however, when the lawns that overlook the Solent are thronged once more, and the harbours of the Riviera again reflect the graceful outlines of these slim Amazons of the sea, smoking room and tea tables will hear the tales—or some of them. And there will be some for ever

His son laughed indignantly with the scorn of youth. "You're too old, dad," he said; "you're fifty-five."

"Fifty-three," amended the older man. "Fifty-three, and I've got a master's ticket." This was a man who raced his own yacht across the Atlantic in the days of piping peace. "But I'll act fair by you," he continued. "I'll go over and



GUN PRACTICE.

untold, because the men who might have told them have passed into the Great Silence.

One story, however, will serve to illustrate the spirit in which the deep-sea yachtsman answered the call.

There was a certain man living overseas who at the outbreak of war was approached by his son. "I'm going over to enlist," said the boy. Now the boy's mother was an invalid, and this was the only son.

The father smoked in silence for a minute, considering his son's announcement.

"No," he replied at last, "not yet. If you are killed, your mother would die. I'll go over first."

volunteer, and if they won't have me I'll come back and you can go instead—and God go with you."

They shook hands on the deal, and the older man went.

Volunteers of fifty-three—even with masters' tickets—were not being eagerly sought after in the Navy at the beginning of the war. The volunteer perhaps realised this, and so it happened that Whitehall accepted his age at his own estimate

—45.

It was older than he looked or felt; and if his clear eyes are any index to character it was the first and last lie he ever told.

His son awaited the return of the prodigal with some impatience; finally he received a letter bidding him to keep cheer-

ful and look after his mother. His parent was at the time of writing in charge of an armed guard, nursing a leaky Norwegian wind-jammer through a north-easterly gale in the region of Iceland. He eventually battled her and a contraband cargo into Stornoway, and got the first bath and dry clothes he had had for ten days. He said he was very happy and

Two divisions of British drifters were lying in a cross-Channel port awaiting orders to return to their base. It was in the winter, and a south-easterly gale was blowing. The subsequent meteorological records testify to its being the worst that year.

The order to return came to the senior officer of the drifters qualified by "as



"ABANDON SHIP" PRACTICE.

doing his bit; and this I hope and believe he still is.

It is this love of the sea and familiarity with it in all its conditions that have served the R.N.V.R. officer in moments of stress in a manner which the frequent D.C.S.'s among them testify. But there are other incidents that have passed without such recognition because they came in the plain path of duty or were incidental to the sea-gipsy's love of adventure. One of these deserves mention, because the two great Reserve services, the R.N.R. and the R.N.V.R., joined hands in the affair and saw it through together.

soon as the weather had moderated sufficiently." The senior officer of one division was an officer of the Royal Naval Reserve, and of the other a sub-lieutenant of the Volunteer Reserve. He of the R.N.R. looked at the sky and the breakers bursting in sheets of foam against the breakwater and thence to the barometer, and opined that it wasn't good enough.

The R.N.V.R. sub-lieutenant said he was tired of harbour and guessed he'd have a bump at it. The R.N.R. sub-lieutenant damned his eyes for a fool, but made the signal for shortening cable in his own division. The gale abated slightly, and the two divisions wallowed out in line ahead through the flying scud.

In mid-Channel they encountered a 4,000 ton steamer, derelict and drifting, down by the head, before the gale. The R.N.V.R. man watched her sluggish plunge and scend in the steep wind-whipped troughs and decided she wasn't as bad as she pretended to be.

"Take charge of both divisions of drifters," he signalled to his *confrère* in

lieutenant had proceeded to windward, commanded his command to their respective skippers, launched his cockleshell of a boat and drifted down in it, half-swamped, until he, too, was able to catch the fall, and so climbed inboard. He was in time to see the R.N.V.R. knock off the cable stoppers and let go both anchors. The drifters were swallowed by the mist



SIGNALLING BY SEARCHLIGHT.

the tiny flagship of the other division, "And take them into harbour. I am going to board."

He then bade his skipper put his craft alongside the yawning derelict, and called for volunteers to accompany him. His men were no cowards, but they weren't tired of life, and most of them had wives and families. "I'll come," said the cook, however.

They ran down wind under the sheer-ing bulwarks, and the R.N.V.R. sub-lieutenant and the cook leaped at a trailing fall, climbed up it hand over hand, and tumbled on to the deserted upper deck of the steamer.

In the meanwhile, the R.N.R. sub-

and rain and proceeded to their base, calling on their Gods to witness they were no cowards, but that there were limits to what a man could be expected to do for sheer love of adventure.

A swift survey of the derelict disclosed the fact that her No. 2 hold was flooded, either as the result of a mine or torpedo. On the other hand, all bulkheads were holding, and the engine-room was untouched. Said the R.N.R. man: "If we could get steam on her, I'd up killick and take this hooker into the Downs." But three men cannot raise steam and navigate a 4,000-ton steamer without assistance, so they made themselves comfortable and waited.

Late in the afternoon a destroyer arrived, the salt spume crusting her funnels, and the handflags busy above her bridge screens.

"Prepare to abandon derelict. Will go ahead and veer a grass-line," said the Destroyer, in much the tone that a parent might adopt to an offspring who has nearly succeeded in getting itself run over by a motor-car.

"Well, now," said the R.N.V.R. to the R.N.R., "That's a funny thing: I'm bothered if I can read that signal. But my sight isn't what it used to be."

"I can make semaphore all right," replied the R.N.R., "but when it comes to reading it I get all of a dither. 'P'raps the cook can read it."

The cook replied at once that it was Greek to him, or words to that effect. The Destroyer, accordingly, after waiting some time and growing more angry, went up to windward and anchored.

"Now," said the R.N.V.R. to the R.N.R., "you talked a lot about your semaphore. Just make them a signal to send us a dozen engine-room ratings and an engineer officer, and we'll raise steam and proceed to the Downs. Thank them for coming to see us, by the way. They're

getting peevish."

The R.N.R., in terms of diplomatic suasion, signalled accordingly, and towards dusk a drenched boatload of the Royal Navy, Engine-room Department, arrived on board. Refreshed with Madeira from the captain's saloon, they proceeded to the engine-room, filled the boilers, lit the furnaces and had steam raised by daylight. The steamer then slipped her cables, which had become too foul to weigh, substituted an Admiralty pattern kedge for the lost anchors, and proceeded modestly under her own steam and the Destroyer's escort to the Downs.

A month later the R.N.V.R. met the R.N.R. ashore.

"Member that derelict we salved together," said the R.N.V.R. "I've been up to London to see about salvage and all that."

The R.N.R. brightened considerably.

"She's worth £120,000, light," he said.

"She is," was the reply, in detached tones such as the Chancellor of the Exchequer might employ to outline his Budget; "but she was on Government charter. As she was salved by"—he took a long breath—"Naval officers, there ain't any salvage."



A Full-Speed Trial

BY

By LOUIS PAUL

(With a drawing by the Author.)

CROSSING the bows of two or three smaller destroyers refitting for another spell at sea, we clamber up the side of one of the latest additions to our mighty fleet. The destroyers of a dozen years ago are no strangers to me. Many a time have I found myself stepping comfortably enough on to their deck from my punt's thwart. But here was a difference with a vengeance! From the wharf, her long grey after-deck looked low enough, but I felt that the ladder rungs might well be resting on a liner's plates.

But what's in a name? The cry is for more speed and heavier guns, and so our classes are ever-growing, and the difficulty is to know where one ceases and the next commences. On the stocks in-shore, partially completed, are several of the next link in the chain, larger than the boat I'm on, and better able to keep the sea and fight their guns in bad weather. The designer is finding it easier to go "one better" in these directions than in the essential of speed.

Quietly we get under weigh; so quietly that those of us who are hard at work on a welcome breakfast in the wardroom look up inquiringly as the first faint tremors of the mighty engines dawn upon us. So up I go on deck, to find that we are clear of the docks and stealing gently down the wide channel. A warm breath of hay floats to us from the fields half-hidden in morning mist; the sky is breaking up with the promise of a fine day. The grimy town with its restless energy lies far behind us in a heavy bank of thundery cloud. Here all breathes of Peace. Yonder in a little creek are red-tiled farm buildings, nestling in clumps of leafy elms, but an ugly duckling, a long low shed, has appeared since last

year, rubbing shoulders with a lichen-covered barn. A continuous hum drifts across the waters, but no thresher is at work; sickles are doing their ghastly work over the face of Europe.

The channel widens, and in a little burst of summer rain (the morning's welcome to the sunshine) a couple of flags flutter at our signal yard, and, in response, a sturdy little service launch comes wallowing out of the haze. Our engines cease their humming and the little chap comes pitching and splashing towards us, an oily-clad figure in the bows, dripping like old Father Neptune himself. Rounding up under our lee, his boat-hook takes hold, the launch rests gently alongside, and a gunnery officer and his satellites climb on board like cats; then away the little launch goes for home, diving into the shallow seas.

So far we have been going "easy," but with more open water the squat funnels pour forth heavier masses of dark brown smoke. I feel the "clutch" at her stern as the screws take hold and she settles down to her work, as if some giant hand had gripped her heel. The curling wave sweeping from her bows on either side is higher and whiter, and there is a new and deeper tremor in the destroyer's soul.

We are working her up for the four hours' full speed trial. As the waters race by, "What's she doing?" I ask of the sub, who is endeavouring to calm his terrier's youthful excitement at the gulls wheeling about us.

"Oh, nothing. About twenty-five."

"What will she go presently?"

"Oh, dunno; so and so."

And the wire hair claims his in-

terest anew. The ship and the sea simply bore him; and yet I knew he'd done his part, and well, at Jutland. A quiet unassuming lot these Navy youngsters, but we know what they can do when the time comes!

Two or three large steamers pass us on their way up Channel—famous liners, some of them, in former days when white awnings and red turbans were the fashion; now going quietly about their business, clad, truck to keelson, in sombre grey. They slip by like marine hearse, actors in some solemn pageant that holds one inevitably in its grip. Innocent-looking little guns, delicate toys, and little suggestive of their death-dealing powers, are mounted here and there on their decks.

The sun breaks as we tear our way into the open. We lift to the swell; the hum of machinery is more insistent, and the vibration becomes one gigantic thrill. We are going "all out," and it is a joyous experience after years of absence from the sea to feel the "lift" as she launches into the transparent depths. With an off-shore wind, everything is in favour of the trial, but, even so, the spray comes hurtling aft like salt shrapnel, stinging one's face. There is, however, no swell to influence such a powerful craft, but a great burst of foam goes out from her flaring bows, dancing in fantastic shape higher than the upper bridge. Into this spray the sun strikes, and the most faerie-like prismatic effects that ever 'witched an artist's eye are dancing in the tossing particles.

Holding on to some "gadgets" on the extreme transom, I see a broad band of interlacing whirling foam coming up from the racing screws beneath, falling away on either side in a deep, smooth curve to meet and war with the speeding bow wave, and finally dissolving in a narrow, yeasty track. Our wake does not spread, and the white lane is visible for miles behind us. A huge tramp, flying light, with a big bone in her teeth, is coming up on our port bow. "Oh to be in her and have a 'sheer plan' of this beauty!" We rapidly close, and, to my astonishment, the bone is her screw, churning the water as high as her taffrail. We are overtaking her, and go past her

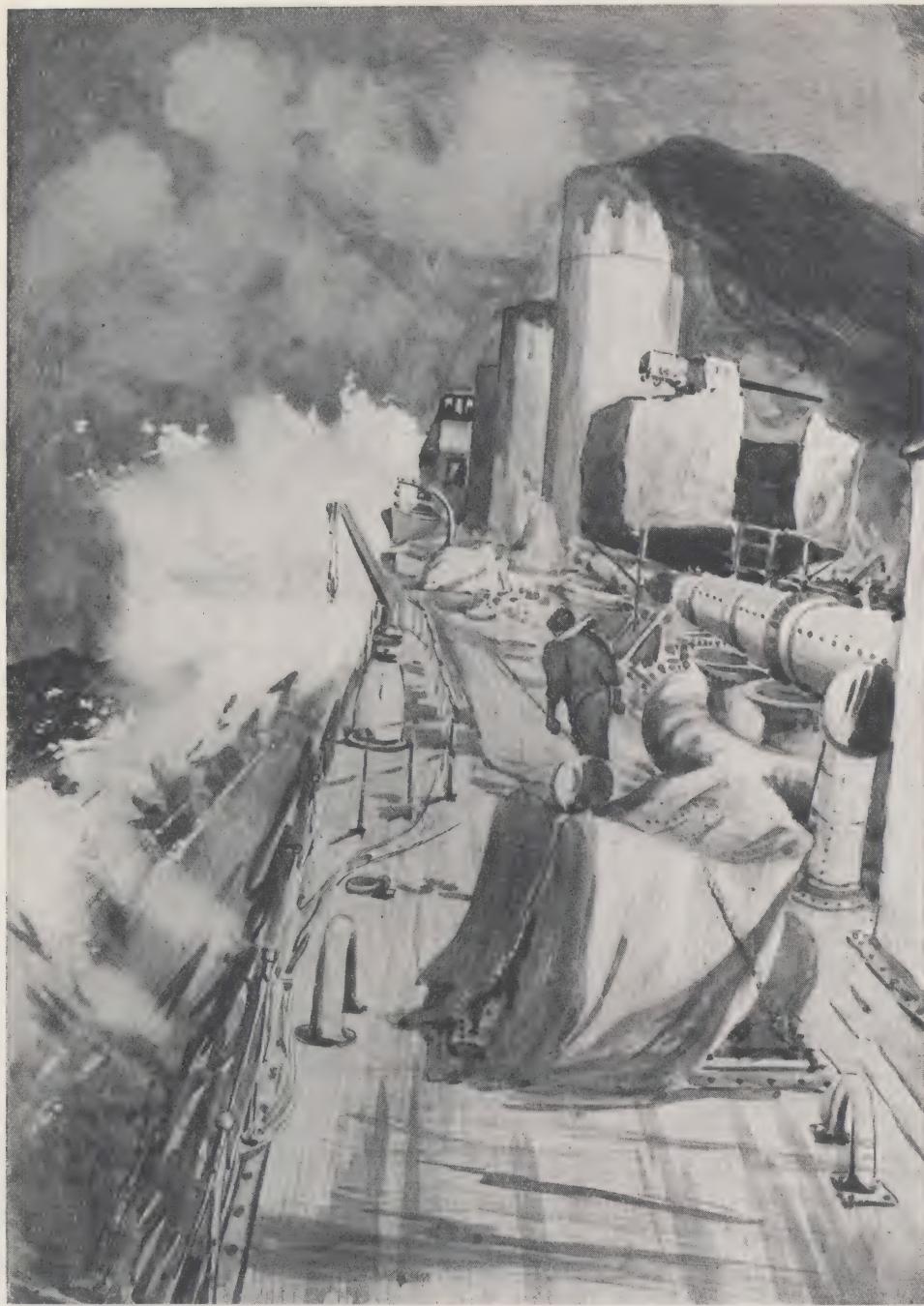
like a train. Her skipper turns his glass on us for a moment, but we do not interest him, apparently: a *blasé* race these sea men! The weather is grand: the coast, some twenty-five miles distant, is a low, faint monochrome, with here and there a darker patch of shadow, or a lone promontory crowned with whitewashed lighthouse. A few steamers, mostly grey, lazily plod on their way; but no one seems to move to-day but ourselves. An untidy old Dago barquentine, lurching along, recalls the time, never to come again, when white sails peopled these waters and a steamer was the exception—away to the nor'ard is a little line of dots, Fraserburgh and Lowestoft drifters—"fishing."

We are closing in again with the land to get on to the measured mile, and at this distance the tall white posts look only a field or two apart. "Go!" and the stop-watch ticks off the seconds—oh, so slowly. The posts are further apart than they looked, but at last I get them in line. "Fire!" I yell, with the spirit of old regatta days upon me.

We work it out carefully, and look questioningly at each other.

Taking a broad sweep, we come in again for the return run. "With the tide" shows a wonderful figure, and I can quite believe the engineer's statement that running down the land with a bit of flood under us we are doing something over — miles an hour! I'd believe him if he said a hundred: the sense of motion and the pressure of our exhilarating rush through the air is so uplifting. The engineering experts are all smiles and nods over their whisky and soda. "Bar hydro and airy-planes, we're IT for the King's Navee!"

The gunnery expert, a dapper little officer with eyes piercing as a hawk's, is suspiciously busy with his crew on one of the gun platforms, and obligingly sends a hand down to say that when we get an offing he'll fire off a few rounds. Expediently, I remove myself to the shelter of the chart-room, as far away as possible from this new experience. My ears are considerably plugged by the surgeon (to my delight a fellow devotee of the YACHTING MONTHLY): without his kindly forethought my hearing would have been



"We are doing something over — miles an hour."

impaired for life by the sharp, unexpected crack of the after gun. A flash of violet flame, a burst of warm-coloured smoke, and the gun recoils and readjusts itself with a rapidity that the eye can scarcely follow. Flash succeeds flash, and I try in vain to analyse the operation; but the whole thing is so instantaneous that I'm uncertain which comes first—the flash, the smoke, or the lightning jerk of the long, slender barrel. Satisfied that the "big chaps" are in good working order, and ready for any "Fritz" that may appear (an enemy submarine was known to have been in the same waters yesterday) a move is made to the "pom-pom" platform. Half a dozen hands range themselves to pass along the ammunition; the delicate muzzle points skywards—crack, crack!—the men's arms swaying automatically as the shells are handed up, and the little gun jerking in and out with wonderful rapidity. At the first crack the medico takes out his cigarette case, offers me a whiff, and we light up; then he points up to the blue arch, where a little white ball appears, then another, and another, to preserve their compact shape for a time, and then dissolve slowly.

My young friend, the commander, feels assured of my enjoying myself whilst *on* board, but comes down at intervals from the bridge to make sure that I'm not *over* board. He finds me putting my faith in a good grip of one of the many deck fixtures. He extols the bridge and the extreme bow as *the* coigns of vantage; but I find that "breezing up

aloft," as high as a house, with nothing of the boat in front of you, can't compare with my chosen spot, right aft, where I have the entire length of the boat as foreground, with the wild, upward dash of the bow wave and the racing mill stream on either quarter. Here, the whole ship is my own; everyone is busy *for'ard*, and I can satiate my artistic soul with countless delights. I am confirmed in my choice of position when the telegraph goes "10° to port." There is a little kick on the "offside," and then, as the centrifugal force comes into play, over she goes. I find myself embracing a stanchion, gazing down, awestruck, at the lightning swirl speeding past the lee rail. For the first time in my life I understand the fascination of suicide; it is so easy, just a slide of a few feet! You may be sure I make careful inquiries once we straighten up, and when her circling trials arrive and the full 35° appears on the dial, I'm riveted to a fixture in a manner that quite reassures my anxious friend, but I thank my stars I'm not with the *élite* on the upper bridge.

The hours wear on, and it is late in the afternoon before we are again slipping quietly up Channel. I feel dazed with excitement, and with a strange sensation of having undergone a severe pommelling. But I can picture the same flier, in days to come, up in the northern seas, full speed ahead through Heaven only knows what weather, and I'm beginning to understand what these young fellows are enduring, coming through it all with a smile and gay "cheero!"





The Grey Patrol

**Being some account of the hardships and humour
of life on an M.L.**

By Lieut. GORDON S. MAXWELL, R.N.V.R. Illustrated by Lieut. DONALD MAXWELL, R.N.V.R.

FOR the benefit of those not acquainted with M.L.'s, a few descriptive lines may not be out of place here of these little grey ships which are patrolling out of almost every port in Great Britain and the Mediterranean. Eighty feet in length, with a twelve-foot beam, they are capable of a speed of over twenty knots, and carry two officers and eight men. Their shallow draught is a great asset, for not only does it render them more or less immune from a torpedo attack, but enables them to get to a certain point quickly by means of short cuts which would be impossible for larger craft. For their size they are heavily armed; a gun is mounted forward, while aft are a couple of depth-charges, those unpleasant under-sea explosives, set for various depths, which make it very unhealthy for any submarine in the vicinity, even

without a direct hit. Then there are lance-bombs for close work, as well as the rifles and revolvers.

The seaworthiness of these boats is better than many people imagine, and on the whole they are fairly easy to handle, though in a high following sea an M.L. is apt to sheer badly or to "take the bit between its teeth" at times and side-slip down a big wave. That, perhaps, is their worst fault. Of course, there are days when the sea is too high for patrol, for commonsense has to be used in the organization of the work, but if it is too rough for an M.L. to keep the sea, it is usually too bad for a submarine to operate also. But M.L.'s can stand, and have stood, some terrible weather, and to call them fair-weather boats is not a libel, it is merely a stupid lie.

It would be hypocrisy to deny that

certain days of patrol work in the few summer months are pleasant; they are, with the spice of danger and adventure to save them from becoming too monotonous, but I think we earn this by the rough times we have in the winter months. Writing as I am just after going through a long and hard winter in the North Sea, I can speak as one who knows, and a glimpse of an average twenty-four hours on patrol may be interesting.

In the grey of a bleak winter's morning three M.L.'s set out from an East Coast harbour "line ahead" (it would be more picturesque to say "stole silently out of harbour," but an M.L. is never silent, unless drifting). Once clear of home waters the patrol leader runs up a signal to form line abreast; in this formation we proceed, with rails down and gun cleared away for instant action, depth-charges and lance-bombs set, and, if deemed necessary by the C.O., rifles and revolvers loaded; nothing is left to chance. There is a "certain liveliness in the North Sea" on this morning, quite a high sea is running, and soon the boat is feeling this, no boat sooner than an M.L., and before long she is "shipping it green." Patrol may be a bit monotonous at times, but it can never be called dry work, anyhow in the winter. There are days when, however much you may wrap yourself up in oilskins, you will still get soaked, and your sea-boots act as involuntary foot-baths of ice-cold water. But this is a thing you have to grin (or curse) and bear on an M.L. on a rough day. Nor is the general wetness confined to the deck, as clothes and boots testify if not worn for a few days, and a calm day is as bad as a rough one for this form of dampness. It is quite a sporting chance which you will catch first—a submarine, pneumonia or rheumatic fever. The betting is about even.

Towards midday the wind abates a little, but not so the cold, and oilskins give place to duffel coats—thick wool, yellowy-brown coats with hoods, and which, if worn with these up and baggy trousers of the same material, give the appearance of a ship manned by giant teddy-bears. Meals on an M.L. are

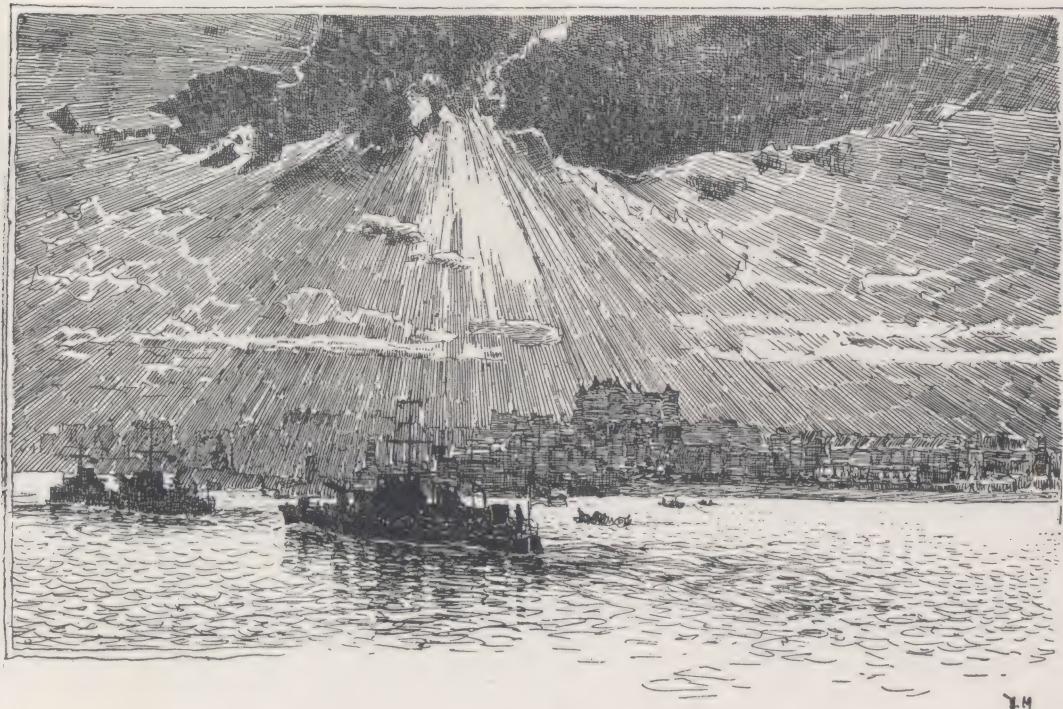
"moveable feasts" where the right hand never knows what the left hand may be doing, for while the latter is conveying food to the mouth the former is probably chasing the plate across the table or picking up a chop from the seat. No meal on patrol is ever dull.

So the day wears on, varied by gun or rifle practice on certain days, and then begins by far the most nerve-racking part of patrol—the night work. Vigilance is always necessary, but this must be doubled during the hours of darkness. A look-out man must be stationed forward to warn the bridge of any object ahead, which may be a mine, a wreck or a buoy, and recognition lights must be kept in readiness to be turned on in case of a challenge by another patrol boat. So, with engines running dead slow and every nerve alert, on through the blackness, the M.L. prowls with all lights extinguished, save a couple or so in the engine room, invisible from without, and the searchlight ready for instant use. Sometimes the engines are stopped, and we drift for an hour with the hydrophone out. This is an undersea telephone, and a man waits in the chart-house with the receivers to his ears for a submarine to "ring up." A submarine will not attack a patrol boat if it can help it, and it is often more useful to keep one of the former under the water, locating its position with the hydrophone if it moves, as it is to drive it away or engage it; for fresh boats can be brought up by a scout, and, as a submarine can only stay a certain time under and must come up to charge its batteries, its chance is small in these circumstances. This is known as "sitting on a submarine." Naturally they get away sometimes, for the sea is a wide place, but they are at least rendered harmless while in the vicinity of a war channel.

A periscope is a very difficult thing to see. Even when you know it is there it is none too easy; but not so a floating mine. Its size renders this fairly simple to locate, except, of course, at night, when you may be on it before the look-out man can give the alarm. Sinking mines by rifle fire is interesting and exciting work; a specially heavy rifle is

used, and they make splendid targets. If a mine is more than usually obstinate the gun is employed as well. It is not only floating mines that have to be accounted for, but also those washed ashore, which have to be towed off the beach into deep water before they are

sailor. People talk glibly on shore in fine weather about "dead reckoning" in a fog, but a practical man knows about how much this is worth when you cannot see the bow of the boat from the bridge. You may know exactly how a certain buoy bears and make due



Motor Launches entering Gorleston Harbour.

sunk. These are not all German mines, some being our own which have broken away from the numerous minefields owing to bad weather.

Thus night and day ceaseless, never-sleeping watch is kept round our coasts by these sea-wasps with their deadly stings, and when the history of the war is viewed down the perspective of time the public will realize better the strenuous, quiet and effective work of R.N.V.R. men on these patrol boats.

The enemy is not the only foe an M.L. has to consider, for the elements have always to be contended with in varying forms. Nor are rough seas and high winds the worst of these; fog is, perhaps, the bitterest enemy of the

allowance for tides, and even then the chances of your picking it up a mile away are about one in a hundred. A snowstorm at sea is hell, a frozen hell may be, but still hell. The driving snow, which more often than not is half sleet, lashes your face like a whip till it is all you can manage to see where you are going, and this with the boat pitching and rolling like an intoxicated joy-wheel trying to turn both ways at once. This state of affairs is bad enough in the daytime, but at night it is almost beyond description, and then kind-hearted folk, with unconscious irony, send cards and games "to relieve the monotony of our brave lads in the North Sea!"

If yachtsmen in peace-time had cruised about the sea in the darkness without a single light afloat or ashore to guide them, and gone in and out of harbours under the same conditions, they would have been put down as lunatics; yet this is what we are doing nearly every night of our lives now; but it is wonderful how used you get to this sort of thing when you have *got* to do it. Coastal navigation at night, when normal times come again, will seem by contrast as easy as motoring down a well-lit street.

Patrol life, though strenuous often and occasionally a bit monotonous, is by no means without its humour, and every base has its own particular jokes. Some of these are general enough to be amusing to those away. One of the best stories is that of the lady who "discovered" a submarine. One day, an officer from an M.L. had occasion to call at a certain war signal station in the course of his duty, and while he was there an old lady, with a telescope under her arm, rushed in in a state of great excitement and breathlessly exclaimed, "I must see the chief officer *at once*. I've got some *most* important news for him."

"I'm sorry, mum, but he's not here," replied the signalman.

"Oh, but I *must* see him."

"You can't, mum, he's gone to London."

"Then I *must* see you."

"Ain't you a-doing that already, mum?"

"Yes, but I want to see you privately." Then she approached nearer to the man and said in what was meant to be a whisper, but which her excitement rendered perfectly audible to the officer, who was standing on the balcony, looking out to sea, "I've just seen a German submarine!"

"You've just seen a *what*, mum?" cried the astonished signalman.

"A German submarine," she repeated emphatically.

"Where, mum?"

"In the sea."

"Well, mum, I hardly expected you'd see it trying to build itself a nest in the vicar's apple tree or fast asleep beneath a haystack. I mean where abouts at sea?"

"Straight out there!" and she pointed to the South'ard, "Why, it's there still," she added in a state of still greater excitement, as she had another look through her glass. "Take it and see for yourself."

"It's all right, mum, I've got me own glass," returned the coastguard.

She waited in anxious expectation while the man gazed seawards intently for a moment, and then he lowered his glass and turning to her said, "Did you happen to have a telescope before the war, mum?"

"Oh no, I only bought it this morning."

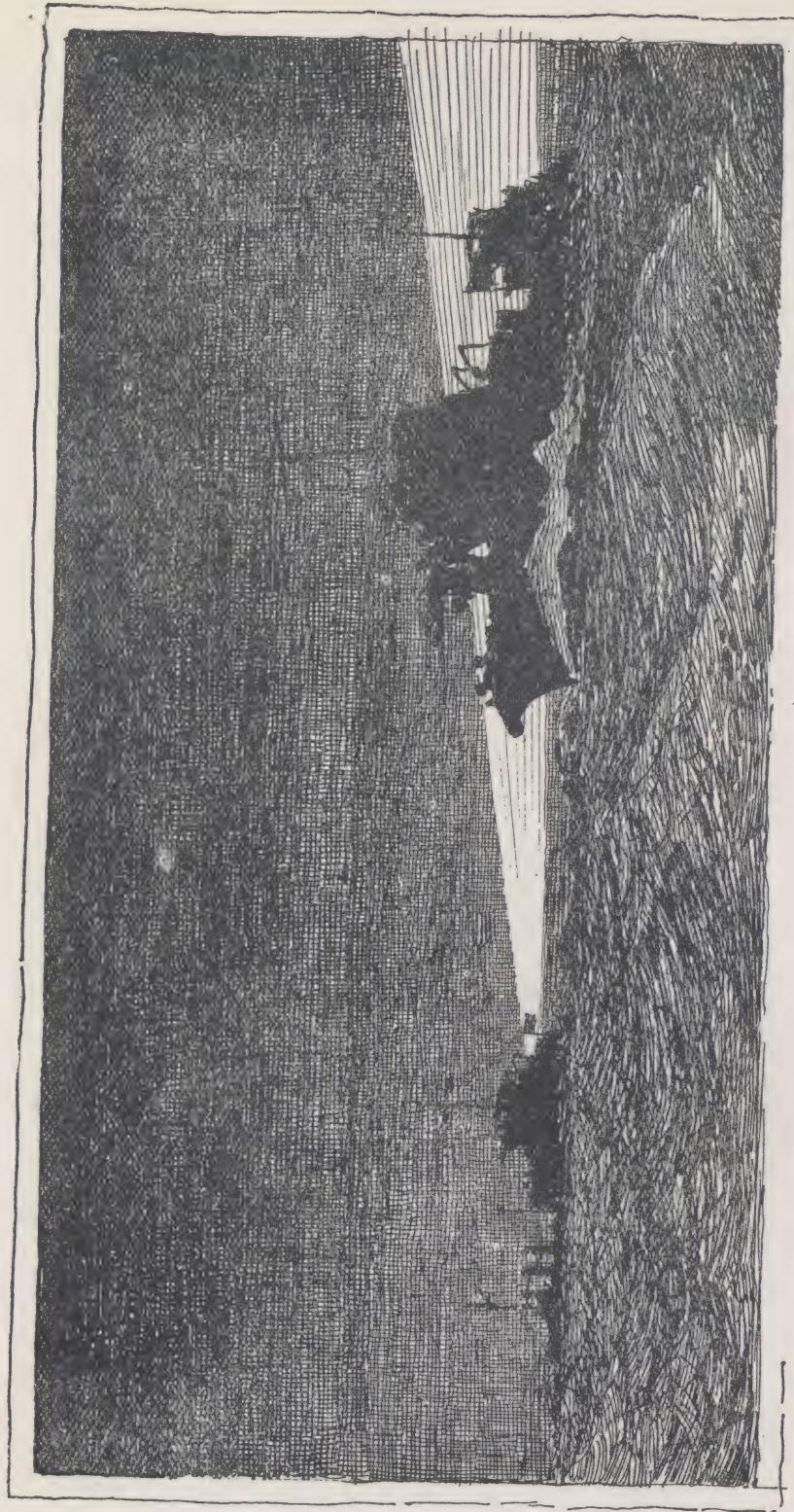
"Then you've never seen the so-and-so buoy."

"Never," she replied.

"Well, mum, I'm sorry to doubt your word, but that's just what you *have* seen. Good morning, mum."

And the voluntary coast-watcher departed a sadder and a wiser woman with her dreams of her country's thanks for being the first to discover the lurking enemy vanished for ever. It was subsequently ascertained that owing to a little difference with a trawler the cage of the buoy had been knocked off and the staff had been mistaken for a periscope and the body of the buoy—a can buoy—for the conning-tower.

Submarine reporting is a common game along the coast, but in nearly every case the story has no more foundation than this, often not as much. A good many reports come from soldiers, usually men who have come from an inland town, and whose knowledge of matters nautical is distinctly hazy. Of course the military officer is bound to pass on anything that is reported to him to the Naval Base, however ridiculous it may seem, and then M.L.'s are usually sent out to investigate. I remember being sent on such an errand one night. The message we had was that a submarine had been reported, at a certain point at dusk, about two hundred yards from the shore, and that it had dived three times in a quarter of a mile. Of course there was nothing there, no one beyond the soldier ever expected there would be, though he had appeared surprised when it was pointed out to him



1 Night Stunt: M.L.'s on the move.

that at that particular spot there was less than a fathom of water at the time, and that ten fathoms would be about the least in which a submarine could submerge, and more astonished still when he was told that no submarine yet built could possibly submerge, under way, three times in so short a distance. Subsequent questioning elicited the fact that he had been to the "Red Lion" during the early part of the evening, a clue that went far to solve the mystery. What he had probably seen was a porpoise.

On another occasion we had a similar trip. A soldier reported that about an hour before sunset—broad daylight—he had seen a suspicious-looking small boat leave a large ship with *two* funnels and *one* mast. The small boat contained two men and was flying a large red flag. Of course we had another wild-goose chase and discovered nothing. No ship anchored off the port had sent a boat ashore that evening at all. If we had spent our time looking for such a ship as had been reported I'm afraid we should have been still searching. The suspicious small boat proved to be the pilot motor-boat, which was there every day, and the red flag was the red ensign. I suppose the vigilant watcher had argued that as it was probably a German boat with a couple of men landing to blow up the port, they had, with true Teutonic thoroughness, flown a red flag to denote that they were about to unload explosives!

Motor Launches are always an interest and a puzzle to the landsman, he never knows quite where to place them. Most people think that the letters M.L. painted on the bows mean Mine Layer, and that the depth-changes are the mines, and I have heard the boats referred to by the curious along the quayside as almost every class of ship, including submarines, hydroplanes and torpedo boats. The greatest compliment ever paid to us, however, was one morning off Brighton. I had been ashore in the dinghy to see the coast-watching officer, and when I came down to the beach again, I found a large and interested crowd gazing intently at the M.L., as she lay about half a mile out to sea. Many people, not content with

the view that could be obtained from the shore, were chartering small boats and rowing out round the M.L. One old boatman was doing a roaring trade—literally—as he took party after party round our ship, and while his boat was filling up with passengers for a new trip he stood yelling in stentorian tones, "'Ere yer are, ladies and gents, nine-pence round the battleship! ninepence round the battleship!" Some battleship. The trippers were very fond of asking questions—usually silly ones—and they were all answered with the gallantry inseparable from the British Navy! They seemed much impressed, and little wonder, for I'm afraid they heard more things about the M.L.'s than are dreamed of in the Admiralty's philosophy. One worthy old gentleman went away filled with awe and admiration, and fondly believing that the nozzle of our deck-hose was the top of a captured periscope!

Another name I heard an M.L. called was not quite so grand; we had been out to a large ship to bring two men ashore, neither of whom had been on an M.L. before. There was quite a sea running at the time and the boat was very lively. The two men were standing just outside the bridge dodger and I could hear all they said. One (the least seasick of the two) remarked to his companion, who was leaning over the rails gazing in a reflective and pensive sort of way at the waves, "Strike me pink, mate, this 'ere aint a boat, its a ruddy rockin' 'orse!"

I shall never forget the entry of three M.L.'s into a small south-coast port, which was really a watering-place with a river harbour. It was August, and the place was crowded with London visitors, driven from the East Coast by war conditions, to whom any sort of Navy ship was a novelty, and as soon as we made our number to the War Signal Station people began to flock from all parts of the beach to the wooden piers that formed the entrance. As we came in with our numbers still flying they cheered us to the echo, hats and handkerchiefs were waved and we could not have had a greater ovation had we just returned from a famous victory. It was

a great moment and I wish that veracity would allow me to enlarge on the situation. I should like to tell you how we landed on the pier to the strains of welcome from the Town Band and listened to an address of welcome from the Mayor (looking, as nearly all provincial mayors do, like a poor imitation of the lordly wine-butler at the Trocadero) and how fair maidens flung their arms around our necks in sheer joy.

But, alas, our real landing was very different. There was no band, the place

did not boast (or apologise for) a mayor, and no lovely maidens greeted us—at least, not then. No, none of these glories were ours; it was a most prosaic ending to a triumphal entry. We proceeded up the river and berthed at a coal wharf, and the only greeting we got was from a barge which was being unloaded. Two grimy faces peered over the side as we approached, and one Carbon knight exclaimed to his pal, "Lor, Bill, if this ain't the blinkin' Naivy a-comin'! "



The Auxiliary Patrol: Mine Sweepers

BY

LIEUT. HARRY VANDERVELL, R.N.V.R.

Illustrated by Lieut. Norman Wilkinson, R.N.V.R.

FROM time to time official statements have testified to the work done during the war by the Auxiliary Patrol Service and the highest Naval commands have publicly testified that the Grand Fleet could not have carried out its functions but for the assistance of the vessels and personnel of this vital branch of the Naval Service. The Auxiliary Patrol comprises yachts, whalers, motor launches (M.L.'s), patrol sweepers, motor boats, net drifters, mine sweepers, paddle mine sweepers and boom defence vessels, totalling over 2,000 craft, which are distributed at points all round the British Isles, as well as at Gibraltar, Taranto, the Aegean Sea, Malta, Egypt, West Indies, and the White Sea.

In the very earliest hours of the war the importance of the mine as a weapon of offence and defence asserted itself in a very unmistakable manner, and the extraordinary efficiency of the German mine and methods of mine-laying necessitated an increasing number of vessels and personnel to deal with the problem, and the advent of the submarine minelayer added very greatly to the difficulties of preventing the laying of mines and locating of minefields when laid. Added to this the whole question has been rendered more complex by the fact that the Germans early in the war abrogated all laws and usages of sea warfare. They made their own laws as they went along. The whole of civilization was their enemy. International laws as to capture of merchant shipping were treated as scraps of paper; they sank at sight, disregarding all the dictates of humanity, killed non-combatants ruthlessly, executed merchant captains, drowned women and children. Enemy

or neutral was one to them in their hate, and their blood-lust culminated in the deliberate sinking of hospital ships and drowning of doctors and nurses.

It is not possible to state in print the actual number of vessels comprised in the Navy as a whole, but some idea may be gathered from the fact that the personnel, as publicly stated in the House of Commons, has increased to treble its former peace-time dimensions, and the greater proportion of this increase is, of course, due to the large number of trawlers and other fishermen, of yachtsmen and yacht hands, other men more or less connected with seafaring, and even landsmen who have undergone special training during the war, who have joined the Auxiliary Patrol.

In addition to vessels of the Royal Navy proper which from time to time engage in mine-sweeping, we have employed in this important and dangerous work specially constructed mine-sweepers, trawlers fitted for mine-sweeping, patrol sweepers, paddle mine-sweepers and also M.L.'s, which last are being used in increasing numbers for a moderately rapid sweep in weather suitable for such small craft. So that altogether there are over a thousand vessels of all sorts belonging to the Auxiliary Patrol, which are engaged in sweeping regularly from one end of the year to the other.

The process of sweeping has been so often described that it is only necessary to remind the reader that there are several methods, but that, whether done by a single vessel or by the more common method of sweeping in pairs, the object is the same, namely, to pick up the mooring chain to which the mine



M.L.'s SINKING A MINE BY RIFLE FIRE.

is attached, and render the mine innocuous by exploding it at a safe distance when it is brought to the surface or towed into shallow water. It stands to reason that it is impossible to sweep the entire seas continually for mines, but certain mine-sweeping units are allocated for continuously keeping free for shipping certain channels, while others are retained for sweeping where new mine-fields are from time to time discovered.

Full recognition has not been, perhaps never will be, given to the splendid work carried out by these men and the R.N.R. or retired naval officers and a few of the R.N.V.R. officers who are in charge of the larger vessels, or units of the smaller ones, work only thoroughly understood by those who have taken part in it or who have been privileged to witness it, and to appreciate the dangers that are ever present. But the work goes on interminably and quietly, undeterred by disaster after disaster.

It was obvious that the best personnel for mine-sweeping was the trawlerman, born and bred to the sea and the hardships that are inseparable from seafaring in small vessels, used to handling warps and springs and wires in all weathers, and with an almost instinctive knowledge of the ocean's bottom, and an uncanny contempt for danger. So that a lot might have been expected of them. But all expectations have been surpassed by actual results, and one must join in the sentiment expressed by a naval officer, who said to the writer, "By Jove, I take off my cap to these trawermen every time!"

Hitherto, with a rough and ready discipline of their own, they have gradually fallen in with naval discipline, which they found very exacting until they saw the common sense and reason for it all, until a skipper saw that great power was deputed to him, and that he was upheld by those of superior rank. Let it be remembered that many of these skippers R.N.R.-T., are small capitalists by reason of having invested lifelong savings in the very trawlers which they command. They are men who have trawled the Dogger Bank, or from the White Sea to Iceland, down to the coasts of Portugal, and have been used to divid-

ing handsome though dearly-earned profits, their crews sharing in proportion. So they have paid sacrifices in kind as well as in lives during the war.

What tales of the sea could be gathered from their logs, or from the relation of their experiences in their family circles when enjoying a little leave.

A ship is shaping a course for the mouth of the Thames. Suddenly there is a terrific explosion and a column of smoke, steam and débris. She heels over, and begins to settle by the stern. An armed yacht two miles away rings full ahead, and she and a trawler a mile away on her starboard bow both dash towards the sinking ship to save life. Suddenly the trawler strikes a mine and "goes up." There is nothing left when the column of smoke and water subsides except a quarter of an acre of splinters, coal dust and ashes, a dan buoy, a box of signal flags, a small dog kennel, a tin can, some bobbing heads and mangled bodies. The armed yacht hastily rescues three living from the wreckage, and proceeds to the sinking ship, whose boats have already been lowered and mostly manned, where she completes the work of rescue just before the final plunge. Then the yacht, grey-painted and sombre, but still showing the graceful lines which in peaceful times were portrayed in glistening white and gold—by some miracle—"Suppose we shall go up, too, some day, old man!") emerges safely from a new minefield, her wireless making a report to the nearest base. From there flutters round the coast, "So-and-so channel closed to navigation. Vessels are not to pass to the westward of a line bearing, etc., etc. Warn all traffic."

At the same time, at a certain naval base on the East Coast, a Boy Scout runs along the pier and delivers an envelope marked "On His Majesty's Service. *Secret*," which he delivers personally to a retired lieutenant R.N., who opens it, initials the envelope as evidence of receipt, and the Boy Scout returns to the S.N.O.'s secretary. Shortly afterwards six paddle-sweepers, which before the war carried muslin or flannel-clad holiday-makers from towns to sea-

side resorts, go thumping out of the harbour, with semaphores wagging and signal flags fluttering. There is no cry of "Bottled ale or stout," or "Choc'lits," or "Spare a copper for the Seaman's Orphanage." Men are busy coiling down, winches rattle, and the cries are such as "Vast heaving" or "Tail on

authors, manufacturers, agents, and what-not) shout orders through megaphones. Forty-eight hours afterwards a signal flows through hundreds of miles of copper wire, "So-and-so channel reported clear of mines," and various war signal stations pass on the information.



MINES EXPLODING IN THE SWEEP.

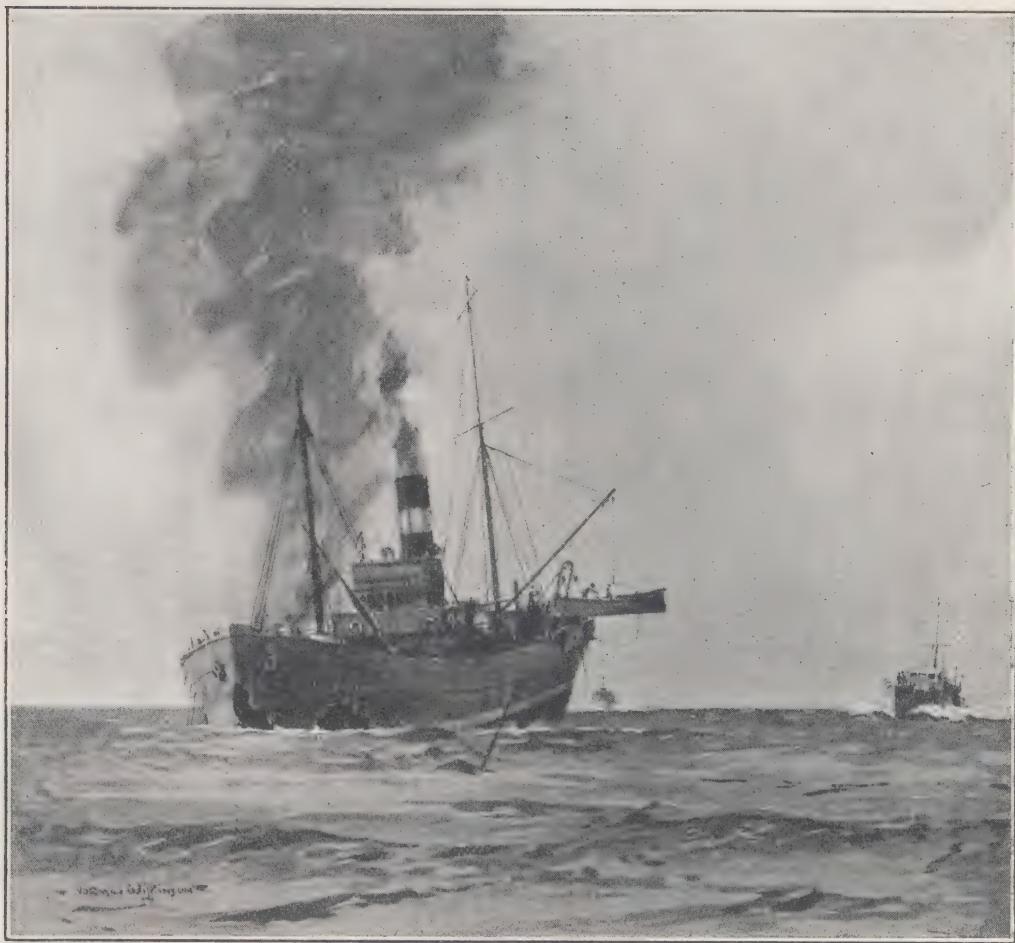
there smartly, lads," as, leaving white streamers of foam behind them, the paddlers put forth to sea in column line ahead.

From several other seaside resorts, now known as Naval Bases, motor launches chase the shipping with the signal "MN" (stop immediately) flying at the yard, and as they come near alongside whilom yachtsmen (in civil life they performed the functions of bank cashiers, stockbrokers, artists, musicians,

Among the casualty lists in the daily papers one may occasionally read that "The Secretary of the Admiralty reports under various dates, killed, a lieutenant R.N., or a sub-lieutenant R.N.R., or a skipper R.N.R.-T." and to only a few relatives and friends does this convey that the Bournemouth Belle was sunk by gunfire while sweeping off Zeebrugge, or that H.M. Minesweeper Young Maudie went up while sweeping three miles off Lowestoft.

But even in such grim work there is occasionally a spice of humour. "We had been sweeping all the morning, and our M.L. was tied up alongside the lightship, whose skipper was having a cigarette with me. Suddenly a yell, 'A mine between the two ships; get aboard the lightship!' I rushed up, sang out, 'Cut

said, 'It's astern!' It had driven down between the two ships, but hadn't touched us as the lines on the M.L. had been cast off. I made a flying leap to the M.L., then chased the mine, and found that it was one of our own E.C. mines. The amusing thing is that it would not have gone off if it had hit us.



M.L.'s GOING TO THE ASSISTANCE OF MINED TRAWLER.

the M.L. adrift!' and with the others made a spring for the lightship. Everyone was busy putting on lifebelts, faces very white, lowering boat, etc., each one expecting every moment to see the bows go up. I asked repeatedly, 'Where is the mine?' No one could speak—tense silence. Then someone

Got it aboard, and on my arrival in port," etc., etc.

And so the work goes on day by day throughout the year. One unit of mine-sweeping trawlers leaves the port, another unit returns to coal, over-haul gear, replenish stores and have a day or two's "stand by." They may have a

section of the War Channel to keep clear of mines, the roadstead and approaches of a large and busy port, the seaway about a point of land where shipping concentrates, and where the soundings are favourable for the efficient laying of mines by the enemy. All round the coast these units of black mine-sweepers, with their high bows and bold, graceful shear lines, may be seen at work, split up into pairs, with their signals flying, keeping station accurately. Many a narrow escape is experienced, and in spite of every watchfulness, at any moment a mine may be struck. In the dusk of the evening a flotilla of them steams into a roadstead for shelter for

the night, and their anchor cables rumble out one after another. In the grey dawn they are under way again, now sweeping in blue seas, now lost to view in a squall of sleet and snow. When a gale is blowing they anchor to leeward of some headland, or cuddle up close to a sandbank, over the top of which, at high water, the breakers roar all night. A wind-riden minesweeper rolls slowly in the swell and lulls its skipper and crew into a deep slumber, with the exception of one hand who is sheltering aft at the galley door. A kettle is sizzling on the stove, and sparks from his pipe fly away into the night.

THE SONG OF THE "M.L."

Sing me a song of a frail M. L.
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Rolling about in an oily swell,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Out on a high explosive spree,
Petrol, Lydite, and T. N. T.,
Looking for U-Boat 3. 3. 3.
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

Sing me a song of a bold young "Lieut."
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Two gold bands on an "Owed for suit,"
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Ship and cable and full ahead,
Hard a starboard and heave the lead,
The detonators are in my bed,
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

Sing me a song of a bright young "Sub."
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
A very ignorant half-baked cub.
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Of the King's Regulations he knows not one
He has left undone what he ought to have done,
And Oh! My Lord, when he fires that Gun
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

Sing me a song of a CMB (Engineer)
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Bred in a garage and sent to sea,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Taken away from the Motor trade,
Seasick, sorry and sore dismayed,
But a Hell of a "Knut" on the Grand Parade.
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

Sing me a song of the M. L. Cook,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
With a Petrol stove in a greasy nook,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
Our meals a lukewarm lingering death,
We'll praise the Hun with our final breath
If he'll strafe our Galley and slay our Chef,
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

Sing me a song of a North Sea Base,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
A dirty forgotten one horse place,
May the Lord have mercy upon us;
When the wind blows West how brave we are!
When the wind blows East, it's different far,
We wish we were back in the Harbour Bar.
May the Lord have mercy upon us.

From the "Rudder."



"The Heart-breaking monotony of Patrol."

"The Scented Trawler"

BY

LIEUT. ARTHUR WATTS, R.N.V.R.

With Illustrations by the Author

AS I sat at tea in the creaking, rolling cabin the hatch above my head lifted and the coxswain's head appeared.

"Floating mine ahead, sir," he reported laconically, and closed the hatch again. And at that the tea things, as if animated by a common panic, lurched into my lap. I clambered up on deck.

Everything, however, has its compensations, and even if my tea was ruined here was at least some slight rift in the heart-breaking monotony of a four days' patrol. Nobody who has not known that monotony can appreciate it, or the pathetic interest with which one regards any floating object whatever. And a mine invariably means sport. Moreover, this was the best sort of mine. Not one of your British ones broken adrift and automatically become innocuous, but a big German fellow, as one could tell by his shape and silvery grey appearance. And so, full of faith and hope, we opened fire.

I believe we fired some thirty rounds first and last at that confounded machine, and at the thirtieth it bobbed and plunged unharmed. And here let me tell those who have never tried, that to hit a mine which shows no more than the top of a bald man's head, and that only visible half the time, is no easy matter. And when the gun platform is rolling to such an extent that the gunlayer has all he can do to hang on to the gun, the thing becomes almost impossible.

At all events we were now at our last case of ammunition (which we dare not spend), and short of knocking the horns off with a boat hook there seemed no way of destroying it, as our mine sinking rifle was unfortunately defective. To make matters worse, the weather was by no means clear, and nightfall but a matter of a few hours.

Twelve miles away, in the neighbourhood of a certain lightship we could be certain of finding a destroyer; but the

problem was, having found the destroyer, to make sure of finding the mine again or even to guard against the possibility of some vessel running into it in the interval.

To me at last came the solution, and

to need comment, and at first C. was all against that plan; but at last, having no better one to produce, he reluctantly consented. It was no easy business to get the skiff over, but launch her we did eventually and the Coxswain and I



"The Coxswain."

I put it to C. as the only possible way out of our difficulties. He, with all possible speed was to return to the lightship and find a destroyer, while I, with the Coxswain to keep me company stood by the mine in the skiff till he returned.

There were risks of course too obvious

tumbled in. We took with us a carafe of water, the top of a loaf of bread and a pocket compass—a rather slight equipment, which later was rendered even slighter by the Coxswain treading heavily on the carafe of water and reducing it to powdered glass.

Poor old C. was far more concerned for our fate than we were. I think he had a mental picture of himself making a report to our Captain the next morning as to how he had come to lose his Sub-Lieutenant, Coxswain, dinghy and a

and nothing to look at but a confounded mine, is no cheery situation. However, there we were, and there we were likely to remain until somebody called for us. We had harder work to keep our positions than I had expected, for while we



"Her Weather-beaten Skipper."

full-sized German mine. But he tore himself away at last and was soon lost in the mist.

I too, felt a little lost. I think we both did; for after all, to beadrift in the North Sea in a tin skiff in February with some tobacco, the top of a loaf of bread

were continually drifting to leeward with the wind, the mine, showing above water scarcely at all, was stationary, and the prospect was not improved by the gradual creeping towards us of that wall of mist which already shut out the horizon. The minutes slipped by, until

an hour and a quarter passed and one might reasonably expect C. to be well on his return journey. But not until another half hour had passed did we catch sight of him. And then, alas! he was a good two miles away, a little

Even if the mine had had anything to tie on to, such a proceeding would have been suicidal; and yet, if darkness fell and no help came, we knew we must infallibly part company with it in five minutes. And a pretty pair of fools we



"Each drinking in the ambrosial perfume of the other."

smudge of grey with a tail of white foam that presently faded into the ever deepening mist, and we were left mournful and disconsolate.

It was a ridiculous position, and one that as every minute ticked away without result became more uncomfortable.

should look in the morning when (with luck) some craft picked us up and we had to explain our position.

But just as I was cursing fate, my luck and the war in general, there hove in sight (quite in the best style of the boys' books) a vessel. In the dim light

she was at first a grey smear that resolved itself into a trawler with (to our intense relief) a useful looking three-pounder. On she came, heading straight for us, and presently I semaphored to her that we were standing by a mine. She slowed down at that, and, having sighted it, stopped her engines at about a cable and a half away. And then came our surprise. As we rowed to leeward of her in order not to interfere with her shooting we began to sniff, to stare at one another and sniff again.

Now there is one smell that is dear above all others to the heart of the homesick mariner—the indefinable fragrance that is sometimes borne on an off-shore breeze. Poppies and warm earth and wood smoke; none of these can one distinguish and yet is reminded of them all. But this! This overpowering stink! Not here the scent of wood-smoke and poppies, nor here the fragrance of the land. Rather the corruption of the London pavements, the reeking perfumes of music hall promenades and the sickly essences of barbers' shops. *Parfume d'amour*, *Frangi-panni*, *Potpourri*, the half forgotten, scarce noticed names swam into one's mind. Memories of hot marquees and perspiring fiddlers and stuffy concert rooms—all that exotic night life of big cities came back to one and ever again a wave of scent more pungent than its fellows would roll over one as it were, and almost stifle one.

And then the Trawler's three-pounder suddenly loosed off and for a few moments all other interests were forgotten in watching her shooting.

Two shots, three overs and the sixth shot exploded the mine with a shattering roar that nearly knocked us off our

seats. And I have no doubt that both the Coxswain and I were thinking that with such a steady platform we could have exploded it at the first shot.

The main business settled, the overpowering stink claimed our whole attention again. Rowing across to the trawler we clambered aboard. And there we found the solution of the mystery. On her main hatch cover and on her decks were little "sachets" of scent. Some were full, some were torn open, and here and there lay empty scent bottles. Near by stood the open case from which they had been taken. The full case it appeared had been picked up at sea, a pathetic enough relic of a good ship gone to the bottom. The trawler men with a quite unconscious humour had smeared themselves and one another with various perfumes and stood about the decks each drinking in the ambrosian perfume of the other. War gives birth to many strange freaks, but this struck us as the strangest! That these essences and perfumes designed for the frail fair should have come into the hands of these sons of Neptune!

We spent a lazy hour on the trawler sitting all the time on the windward gun-talking to her weather-beaten skipper wale—idly speculating on what had happened to C. And when at last we saw him tearing across our bows a mile away the dusk was falling. Poor C., I think he breathed a very full sigh of relief when he received a signal to the effect that we were safe and sound aboard, and it amused us somewhat and seemed a fitting tribute to our heroism that three other M.L.'s and a T.B.D. were busily hunting for us. But C.'s first remark when he got alongside was:

"Good God! What a stink!"



The R.N. Anti-Aircraft Corps, R.N.V.R.

By LIEUT. G. E. MILLS, R.N.V.R.

Illustrated by R. Mills, P.O., R.N.V.R.

THE advent of war brought with it many strange problems. One of the most difficult was undoubtedly the defence against attack by air. The nation was totally unprepared to cope with this insidious method of attack, but the Admiralty took up the challenge, and, as beffited new problems, brought into being a new Corps with new minds to bear upon the subject.

Well do I remember the early days of the war when eager crowds were waiting at the Admiralty applying to be enrolled in the R.N. Anti-Aircraft Corps—a branch of the R.N.V.R. Then the subsequent acceptance and the wonderful transformation from civilian to Naval service. Every profession was represented and we embarked on the new enterprise with an unquenchable enthusiasm.

The men were, at that time, either over military age, or in some other way exempt from military service. They served alternate days, or nights; six-hour day watches and four-hour night watches, on guns or searchlights. This system enabled the menace to be met

without unduly interfering with the carrying-on of the country's business. Surely a sound scheme, worthy of imitation in matters relating to home defence, and reflecting credit on the promoters. It is well known by whom it was approved.

Just try to picture the problems, mathematical and otherwise, that present themselves when dealing with this new weapon of attack. To tackle a target free to move in that inexhaustible area called space, with no constant factor to go on, but with ever varying height, angle and speed. It affords food for reflection and justifies the creation of a Corps composed chiefly of Public School and University men.

We all "repaired to our ships accordingly," mostly, in those early days, on roofs of big buildings. I was attached as an A.B. to the good ship "Pickles." How we got to love her, and the super-smells wafted up to stimulate the sentry.

Naval ratings acted as our instructors. Good fellows they were; although, being trained to firing on the horizontal, they could not be brought to believe that the

rules applying to such could not possibly apply to high angle firing. They instructed us in gun drill, squad drill, and rifle exercises. Those on "the Lights," instructed in the handling of searchlights. They gloried in chasing the civilian round, and what good it did

public school spirit, trying to out-do the others, and become more efficient. In those days the appointment of a P.O. was more or less a matter of luck, as there was not much to go on. We were all new. I remember my surprise after having introduced a man to the Corps,



"Waiting, Waiting, yet always Watching."

us all. From "action" to fire drill, to squad drill, and back to "action," till we were fit to drop. Then a break, perhaps, occupied with those inimitable yarns over a cup of tea or, worse, coffee extract.

We were divided into crews with a P.O. in charge of each. The keenness was grand. Each crew, with the old

at finding him turn up on my own station as a C.P.O., while I, his introducer, remained an A.B.

I dared to ask him how it happened. He replied that he had been asked if he had ever been to sea. "Oh yes, I own a yacht," was his answer (and incidentally his qualifications for Anti-Aircraft work).

Such were the early humours; but I never regretted omitting to mention that I had been afloat and perhaps missing the joys of my bold A.B. days.

Gun drill, squad drill, rifle drill and signalling kept us busy. Squad drill on some roofs became quite a science, endeavouring to evade the numerous bunkers into which the callous crew were continuously trying to entrap the unwary officer or P.O. It made you think quickly.

It was a proud day when a Lieut.-Commander, R.N., visited our station to inspect us at gun drill. As luck would have it, everything came off and we did our drill without a hitch. Naturally the N. Rating was delighted, as were we all. We got mentioned at the Admiralty and our crew became "known," bringing much cheery criticism from other crews.

All the members of that old crew are now scattered to the four winds but I can confidently say that they will always remember the delightful "watches" and put down any success to which they may have attained to the training on the good ship "Pickles."

There are few A.B.'s who, at some time or another, have not had to answer queries from old ladies, chiefly at railway stations. Much humiliated we all did our best, as handy men, to advise them. Lifts have also attracted attention to us. Once when visiting a large building for signalling practice, I got lost in the lower depths, when, suddenly coming across someone, I listened astonished to "I suppose you are from the Water Company?" But there were loftier days, when as a C.P.O., waiting on the Tower Bridge—the bridge being up—I was accosted by an American lady and her charming daughters, and asked if I was the manager of the Tower Bridge. I said I could not aspire to such honour but was merely a humble member of the R.N.V.R., but should be pleased to oblige. There are many such stories of course, all taken in good part and adding to the humour which is so essential to carrying-on.

Courses at Whale Island, Chatham, and Shoebury formed part of our education. These were greatly appreciated.

Our men did exceptionally well in these courses, many qualifying as G.L.3.

Gradually the old roof gun stations disappeared; the smaller inner circle was extended, and a larger area created, comprising outer stations. Sir Percy Scott introduced more modern weapons. It wanted an Admiral of his repute to get them introduced.

In addition to the London defences, we were manning a Mobile Section on the East Coast and elsewhere. Slowly but surely improvements were introduced; as slowly as it dawned on the authorities that to get real efficiency meant spending money. Gadgets galore were invented by members of the crews. Many of these were of inestimable value. All were provided out of the officers' and men's own pockets, so keen were all to get on with the job and so fascinated in trying to overcome its complexities. Thus did the pioneers of Anti-Aircraft work struggle for supremacy.

If, in those days, they met with criticism few understood what, in the silent naval way, they were doing, and how they were handicapped. But the public were generous and treated us splendidly. After one of the early raids the local inhabitants made much of the men who worked the guns and lights. Both public and private individuals showed their appreciation in a practical way by contributions to the mess and, in some instances, by donations which were handed to the local Red Cross funds or other charities.

For those raids, with their tense thrills, we lived. For these we kept weary watches, waiting, waiting and yet always watching night and day in all weathers; men, mind you, not accustomed to being out in such conditions. The first winter was terribly trying. The good ship "Pickles" held $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches of water on her upper deck. There was no sentry box in those early days. No shelter from the blast. It was all looked upon as part of the game, although men have suffered, yea, some have died as a result of their humble efforts, bravely and silently borne.

Even the "stand-bys" and raids had their humours of course. The following

message was passed through the wrong megaphone and, intended for the look-out, reached the astonished telephonist in his sealed chamber: "Keep a good look out and report anything you see." I recall, too, how on "Grand Rounds," visiting a station, the sentry challenged as follows: "Halt, who goes there? Has Is up! Advance and show your

roof, a staircase. As there was nothing doing he was lolling about with his rifle resting against a chimney stack, when he heard steps approaching his post. His "Halt, who goes there?" brought the reply, "It's only me, ducky," and the next minute the arms of the girl "what cleans the building" were round his neck!



"Are you the Manager?"

pass." The answer of the irate skipper was to this effect: "You blinking idiot, how the hell can I show my pass with my hands up?" Probably this was sufficient warrant for saying, "Pass Grand Rounds, Alls well!"

Another episode is alleged to have occurred on a roof station. It was related to me by a Naval officer who was asked what was the correct procedure to have followed in the circumstances. The sentry guarded the only entrance to the

Through many funny phases, through thrilling times, the old Corps has made good. I speak from first-hand knowledge, as one who has learnt to love the Corps, when I say *it always was good*. With such keenness it was bound to be. It merely wanted encouragement. It wanted money spent on it. It wanted a keen, strong hand to guide. It wanted opportunity. The whole of the A.A. defences of England could have been efficiently run by such a Corps because

they were the type of men needed for the particular work. Incidentally the business of the country need not have been greatly disorganised.

The A.A. defences of the country were eventually taken over by the War Office. Although the R.N. Anti-Aircraft Corps is still responsible for a very vital area of the London defences, being lent by the Admiralty for this purpose, great reductions had unfortunately to be made in the personnel. We had lived in an unsettled state of rumour for month after month, but the blow when it did fall was none the less bitter, for it entailed

the breaking up of the fine old Corps. The Mobile Section went. Thus the Corps became but a fragment of its former self, numbering under 600, where it formerly totalled between two and three thousand. Those who have left the Corps are serving in other spheres of usefulness in all parts of the world. Those remaining now serve whole time in the strictest sense, living on their stations; and they still strive with the same unshaken resolve to get on with the job for which it has pleased God to call them into being.



As an A.B.



Drawn by Muirhead Bone.

"The Great Cranes which stood aloft."



"The Great Shears and Crushing Punches."

Drawn by Muirhead Bone.

The Romance of Shipbuilding

BY

THE EDITOR (M.I.N.A.)

LONG years ago, in an age which seems to belong to another world, I gazed wistfully through the gateways of the vast shipbuilding yards which stretch for so many miles along the Clyde. Nothing fascinated me more than these huge enterprizes with their rough and ready plant. It was out of bounds for us boys—*rough* men the workers were called—but by fair means or foul I managed to reach the great shears and the crushing punches. Over the timber baulks which floated in the wide pounds one could, with practice, make passage to where the tall sterns of half-plated craft stood, high, gaunt and

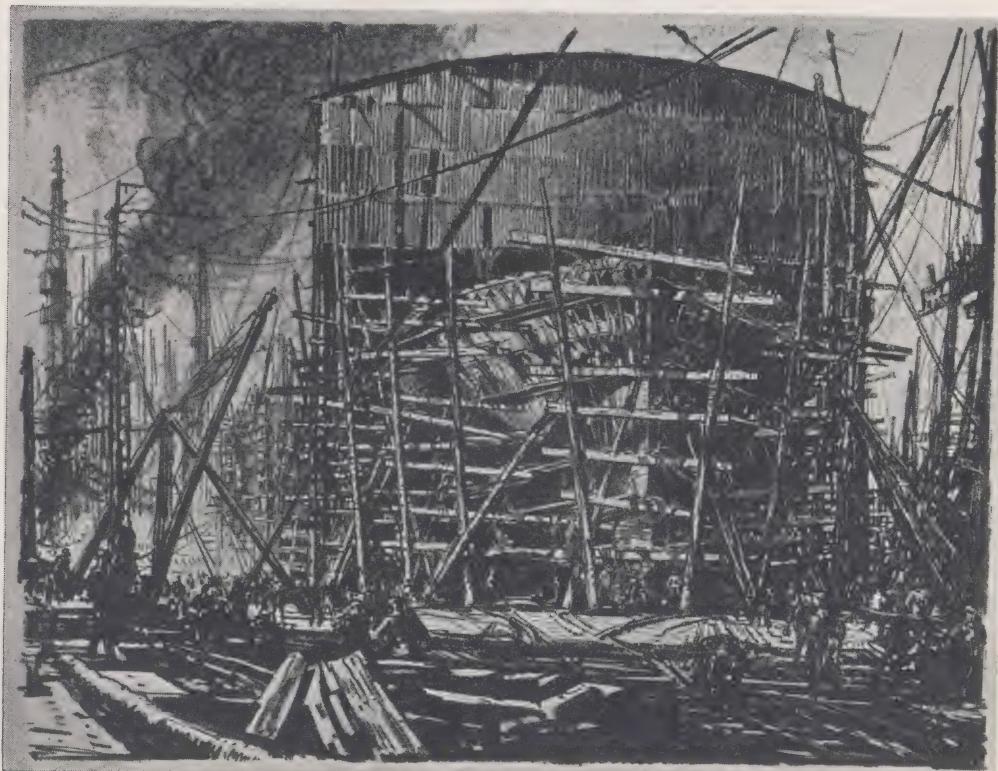
rusty. It seemed wonderful to see great ships emerge from the wilderness of these littered yards, for these were the early days of shipbuilding, when a battle of wits was carried on between ship owner and ship builder, between buyer and seller. The latter put little in plant and machinery, and when that little stood idle, the wily ship owner made "enquiries," and many a builder must needs make a bad bargain to keep his steam in use. Yet these matters concerned me little. I saw the ships sail or steam to sea, to the uttermost parts of the earth; and I saw them return, with unkempt men in heavy sea boots and carry-

ing sheath knives at their belted waists. They were of all races and colours, yet one people—seamen. And from our own circle an older lad would occasionally travel to the docks, a heavy wooden box with stout rope handles accompanying him. The sea called and they went to it—in their hundreds.

But it was always to the yards where the boats took shape that I turned, where the clatter of the rivet hammer or the soft ring of the caulkers' mallet made music. There in later years, clad in the dungarees of the shipworker I became part of the romance.

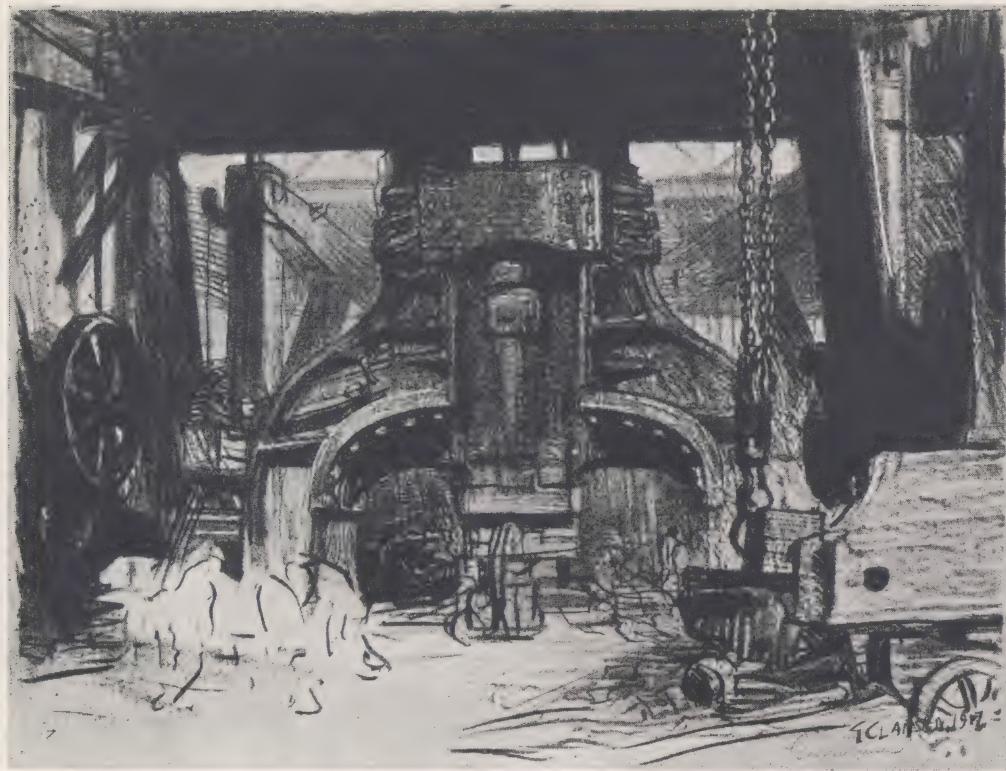
What a wonderful thing it seemed! Steel plates littered the ground. Angle bars were stacked on every side. Yet from these ungainly things we constructed the great ships which slowly materialised between the staging which ran in "berths" to the sea. We punched holes in the bars, and bent them into their pre-arranged shapes; we marked, sheared, planed, and punched the plates as they swung in chains be-

tween the jaws of machines which drove holes through them as if they were of cheese. We rolled them in every direction, for there is nothing flat or square in a ship's hull. And so they left us to be swung by the great cranes which stood aloft on to the angle bars which we had previously handled, there to find a place where every hole found a fellow, where its surface bore evenly at every point—there is only one place for each plate throughout the entire hull of the biggest ship, only one place where it will fit, and there every hole and every edge must lie as close as if they were grown together. Thus bar by bar, and plate by plate the framing and the plating go to make the shell, the finely modelled hull of the new ship. Rivetters, with their endless hammering, fasten the work with molten rivets, to make the whole a homogeneous mass of steel. And so there stands our ship at last, the work of our hands, rusty and besmirched, but tight and smooth as any bottle.



Drawn by Muirhead Bone.

"Great Ships slowly materialised between the Staging."



"The conversion of the great ingots."

Drawn by George Clausen, R.A.

Surely it was romantic enough, this creation out of apparent chaos! Nor did it seem less so when chaos became an ordered system. Each plate and bar bore a number and was predestined to fit its final resting-place. The acres of plates were not alike. Of all thicknesses and sizes, some were square, some tapered; few were like their neighbours even as they lay in that unintelligible tangle. They were of different qualities, too, for the curious might find on each one hieroglyphics denoting its strength. Studious men had determined how close we might punch the holes without endangering the steel, how sharply we might bind our plate without fear of fracture. Knowledge killed none of the romance, but rather deepened it. The tangle was unravelled; everything had its place in the scheme of the naval architect, but the wonder of it all never ceased to fascinate.

So, having learned to build with steel

we turned to paper. Thereon we planned the whole from the first form of model to the smallest fitting in the furthest corner of the structure.

And thus the brain conceived what the hands fashioned, and till the new ship had churned her way through exhaustive trials none could say that it had been accomplished well or ill.

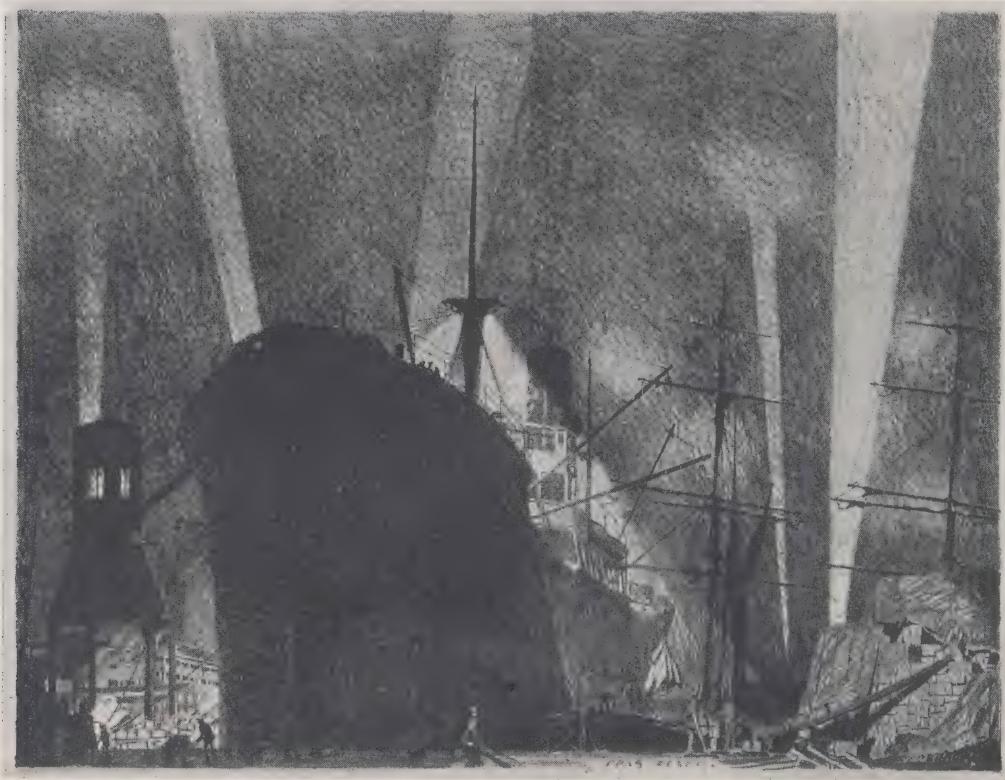
The unending decks of spacious cabins, the vast cargo holds, and the intricate equipment would be valueless had the fundamental "lines" or figures been wrongly computed. The conversion of the great ingots and incomprehensible castings into the sweet working maze of the engine room would have been in vain had the myriad parts and their relationships been miscalculated.

A building of wood or stone has functions to perform, but what are they compared to those of the ship, which must generate the steam her engines

require to turn her propeller at such a rate as will give a given speed in the roughest sea without endangering her structure or the comfort of all on board. A ship must be strong, yet she must yield at times to abnormal stress, and the engines must provide power, light, heat, ventilation, loading and unloading equipment, not to speak of innumerable other necessities. And to make it all from these plates, bars, and chunks of steel!

Many a time have I sat and marvelled at the wonder of it all. When the pulley belts ceased to creak, and the deafening uproar was replaced by a sudden quiet which almost hurt the senses, the marvel gripped one by the throat. And in Bond Street, London, of all places in the world, it came back to me. There, in the Fine Art Society's Galleries are shown the work of eighteen artists who have depicted "Britain's Efforts and Ideals in the great War."

Shipbuilding is one of these efforts, for we stand to-day face to face with the essentials of national life. We live upon an island, but we work so much for others that we cannot spare the time to grow and cultivate our food. So our enemies would starve us by concentrating on the destruction of the vital artery of our national life—our ships. Vigilant sentries combat these efforts under the seas, but the ship which is destroyed in fifteen minutes may take as many months to build. Fortunate it is for us that we hold another weapon of defence. The great yards of our northern rivers grow busier, ever busier. Day and night the hum of machinery mingles with the rattle of deftly wielded hammers; long trains of trucks bring those interminable plates and angle bars for the waiting hands to mould and weld them into ships. There never was a time when we could more fully appreciate the Romance of Shipbuilding.



"The vital artery of our National Life."

Drawn by Charles Pears.

“A Job of Work”

BY

SUB-LIEUT. R. N. STONE, R.N.V.R.

IT was a rude awakening: they sometimes were these winter nights. A clattering crash overhead, a glare, a shouting strident voice impinged on our sleeping senses; urgency, haste, the very essence of the commotion. And the C.O. and I shot out of our bunks simultaneously, reaching for switches and garments. An icy, sleet-filled draught came down the hatch. One's flesh recoiled. A switch turned and the cabin flooded with subdued but seemingly dazzling light, as the words came clear: “Proceed to sea instantly—at full speed. Position: Lat. ____; Long. ____; and stand by sinking craft.”

“All right; put your head down forward and rouse the hands, will you?”

“Yes, sir.”

In a few seconds, clad in pyjamas, coat and trousers, with “duffles” over all, we were on deck—blinking and groping forward.

Rain, sleet, and a whistling, moaning wind of Arctic quality in that it reached the very marrow. All around a pit of blackness, save where pierced by sudden shifting stabs from torch and searchlight—only to leave the darkness blacker still.

Stumbling, I blundered against a form. “Cox’n! All hands on deck—stand by to cast off—Hurry!”

“Aye, aye, sir!”

In the chart room I had the parallel rules just nicely on the course, when a sudden vibration gave rise to language unparliamentary. The engineers had lost no time. Notebook in hand I gained the bridge, jotting the time—12.30—to the accompaniment of a babel of voices and a renewed disconcerting flashing of lights.

The telegraph jingled. The C.O.

growled. The voices around took shape and order, as with a jerk we started moving.

“Port a bit!” “Steady!” “Starboard a little!” “Now you’re all right!” “Yes, you’re clear of the wire!” “Good luck!” etc.

Slowly ahead we went, helpful watchers aiding as we slid from out that tangle of craft, large and small. Then with eyes more accustomed to the conditions, we proceeded out of harbour.

Soon, almost dangerously soon, tense and nerve strung, we were speeding into the outer Stygian night. Spray drenched, sleet blinded, staring and watching in utter darkness—life-belted. Close abeam, barely discernible raced another of our class; there were others, indistinguishable, astern. For certain reasons no lights save faint stern lamps were carried. Suddenly a challenge flashed out ahead. Our speed in answering was noteworthy, but in spite of it the challenger’s searchlight played on us for one brief second. Too late we tried to avoid the swell of that friendly but grim and silent greyhound. Crockery with other things below played discordantly a protesting tune, as, plunging and tossing, we passed. “A holy mess,” the man bringing tobacco reported.

At eighteen knots one is scarcely care free; there are things other than destroyers to look out for and bear in mind. We are kept busy.

The C.O. after a time unburdened himself of information, gathered whilst the chart room held me. He said, jerkily, spitting out the words (we spat out the spray as a matter of course).

“Huns are out—two destroyers sunk or sinking. One of ours—one of theirs—

submarines about—keep your weather eye lifted. Still fighting. See that all hands are wearing life belts. They don't like 'em—but—orders are orders. Make them wear 'em."

Firing is now heard above the activities of the engines. We speculate disjointedly as to what is happening. The look out man reports flashes and presently a bright yellow light flaring vividly and suddenly illuminates the horizon, dying slowly as to our quickened ears comes a muffled thunderous roar. What is it? and how distant? Anyway, it is nearly ahead; so an order is given for extra revolutions if possible. But it isn't possible. The engineers are already nursing their charges with solicitude. We are feeling slightly excited and the wet and cold seem less noticeable, although a nasty sensation assails one's back from the neck down, in spite of duffle and muffler.

But there are things to be done, so very little is said, just the necessary orders and responses—then action. The excitement has passed, but the crew clinging damply to rails and stanchions—anything handy—give one the impression of being fully on the *qui vive*, hoping, almost longing for a scrap.

As time goes on no more flashes are seen. Only now and again at ever-widening intervals are reports heard faintly and yet more faintly. Apparently the vessels engaged are drawing away.

The cook, something of an acrobat, brings welcome coffee, hot and strong, and invigorating. Lucky is the man, who, lurching as lurch he must, loses not less than half his allowance in the drinking.

Upon arriving at the appointed position, speed is reduced to a snail's pace in comparison to that of our previous comet-like flight. And so, crawling, stopping, listening and again proceeding, circling and turning this way and that, we search the baffling contemptuous seas. The firing has altogether ceased or is beyond earshot, when, dimly gleaming, the lights of the drifters are seen to port, and ahead, barely perceptible, the steady town lights loom on a foreign shore.

Our course being shaped towards the drifters their lights are suddenly obscured. We challenge as a challenge is thrown to us, and a second demand is made and answered. Our larger sisters, it would seem have an uncanny knack of scenting us out. That dark slim blur heeled far in response to quickly altered helm as at unknown knots it slithered by. The gunlayer said: "She thought we was a submarine." Possibly those soft uttered words were nearer the mark than the speaker knew. Destroyers are ever suspicious.

We are wearied and stiff jointed as a signal comes: "Someone calling up our number."

It proved to be our "next astern." For a moment we talk in dots and dashes; then, closing, megophones are used. "Any luck?" "No, have you?" "No, but at the other position—about four miles from here—S—241—found float—12 alive and got 'em aboard." "Hoorah! Ours or—Huns?" "Ours!" ——"Well, carry on." "Righto!"

We go divergent ways; one is more alert, less weary. The very early dawn is sensed rather than seen when the Cox'n's good eyes spot something at last.

"Can't tell what it is sir. Two points on starboard bow, sir."

The object on examination is found to be part of a lifebuoy, without name or lettering. A little later, the wind and rain ceasing, they became negligible qualities. We are much pleased thereby—in fact, elated. We dance grotesque, staggering, stamping steps all over the deck—to say around the deck would be incorrect—and indulge in much arm-swinging, the improved circulation more than compensating for the exertion. We feel very fit, considering.

At five o'clock the waves are still of threatening size. We ride them in curiously smooth fashion I am thinking, so mention the matter to the C.O. He has already noted it.

"Yes, it is oil," very quietly he replies.

Almost instantly comes a cry forard: "Something ahead—about ten yards.

sir!" The engines stop and are reversed for a second. "It's a man, sir—It's a man!"

Speedily the rescue work is commenced, but before the poor fellow is got on board we know his spirit has fled. A solemn hush overcomes us and a pity nigh to tears. A loathing of these slimy, oily seas—mocking and suddenly awe-inspiring. One can but admire the crew. Steady and obedient men and lads of all sorts. Some, hardy fishermen, others town or city bred—the latter a short time since vastly ignorant of the sea, but now learning fast, developing capabilities unsuspected.

None could be more tender than these men, or gentler. As the light increases so does this arduous heartrending work. The poor bodies are brought on board and reverently covered. One is assailed by many thoughts and emotions, conflicting, indescribable. But outstanding is a wonder and a thanksgiving, that God in His infinite wisdom and goodness had seen fit that these hapless sailors should die in peace. And in peace they died, for their faces smiled. I think this is why one is so near to tears.

The sun rising strongly makes the commencement of a rarely beautiful day. One somehow resents this; it seems inappropriate. But on reflection, Nature is of course Nature—unalterable, wise.

And how insignificant one feels. Tired and weary once more we steer homeward with the Ensign at half-mast.

Not all our countrymen, the dead. Both sides have suffered it seems, and in a way—for one is but human—there is a grim satisfaction in the knowledge that the enemy has "paid the piper." The stretcher bearers are tender too, but so efficient that an unobservant person might deem them heartless. The thought dominant in our minds runs something like this: "Poor fellows! Thank God 241 got there in time. Nearly gone but now safe—thank God!"

With Ensign once more close up our vessel is presently secured and made snug with her sisters of the night.

We feel pleased with 241 and board her and say so. But S—— is modest and retiring. He desires sleep and will not listen.

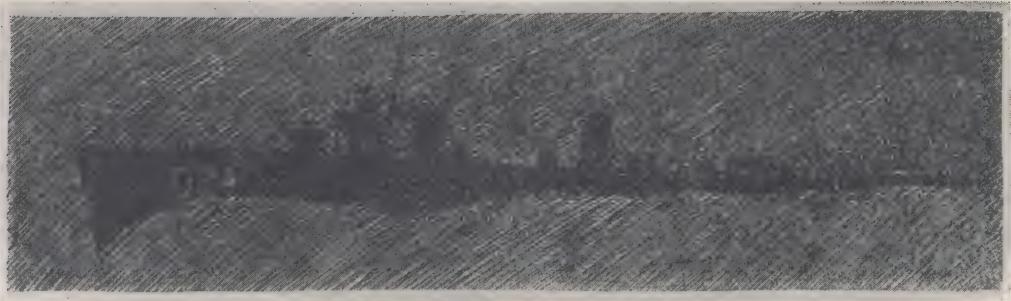
Sleep! Yes, not a bad idea, but a bath and a shave first—and a belated breakfast.

The C.O. has forwarded a report. We shave. My face in the glass is disturbingly dirty and appears strained.

Then as we breakfast a signal arrives: "M.L.—— is excused duty till 8 a.m. to-morrow."

Ten minutes later the whole fleet might have tramped the deck above—we should not have known it.





"No glimmer of light comes from them; no sign or sound of life."

OPERATIONS

BY

"LIEUTENANT," R.N.V.R.

VEN a stranger, an unobservant stranger, would, I think, realise that there is something in the air. On the decks of the various craft that lie in the inner harbour officers and men stand and sit about in little groups. There is little talking or laughter, but, very noticeably, that curious kind of hush in which the inhabitants of a village (and after all we are a village) discuss some event of importance. From time to time someone will cast an eye up at the slow moving summer sky and the white cliffs, all white and gold in the evening sunlight. "On, I bet," he says, and his companion agrees.

And later, as the gold on the cliffs is paling and the sun near to its setting, a grey car drives up along the quay and our Captain and Commander emerge. It is "on." We are all glad, I think; glad to escape from our prison and its oily walls, glad at the prospect of activity after a week of listless boredom, glad above everything to think that we are to take our fair share at last of those risks that others have for their daily round.

The little groups break up, the men go whistling about their work, and in-

stead of the atmosphere of waiting and suspense all (as the novelists say) is animation. Darkness has fallen by the time that the signal to proceed out of harbour has been made from the flagship; darkness that is no more than the blue twilight of a summer night.

It is a night to seek adventure, warm and scented, with a light breeze blowing from that quarter which is most favourable to the work in hand. There is no moon, but brilliant starlight, and in the West, behind the darkened town, the after-glow still remains. There show up now on our starboard beam our escorting destroyers, a line of low, black shapes, indescribably sinister, that have crept up out of the darkness. Like great cats they seem, silent save for the purring hum of their turbines, stealthy in their gliding swiftness, purposeful and swift to strike. No glimmer of light comes from them, no sign or sound of life, nothing but that continuous muffled drone. And yet their power is 30,000 horse. We pass those faithful drudges of the fleet, the mine-sweepers. Many of them, before the war, were excursion steamers, the "Clacton Belle," and her like, and have

borne their sweltering deck-loads upon the muddy Thames, paddling their inglorious way to the piers of Margate and Ramsgate. The music of the harp and the cornet have resounded through their saloons, and on their decks, countless love affairs have been conducted. But now the harp and the cornet are gone, and their audiences swelter in the trench and the munition factory. Gone are the white paint, the gilding and the plush curtains, and in their place is the dingy Service grey. An allegory of the war.

And now on our port bow looms vaguely the dim shape of a monitor. We draw up to her, pass her. Our fleet is in proper formation. Gigantic she appears at night, thrusting her great bulk through the water that foams and creams along her bilges, while high up in their turrets her fifteen inch guns point ahead, grim and implacable. One has a tremendous sense of elation. All this movement, this silence, these hurrying mysterious ships, half-seen in the soft, warm darkness, constitute true Romance. Patrol, lonely interminable patrol, is but the shadow of War. This is War.

The hours slip by and in the east the first faint flush of dawn shows. We are off the Belgian coast now, that "other side" that has stood for so much romance and terror and dreary squalor, and we can see the brilliant star shells rise above the lines at Nieuport, and, higher still, the pin-points of lights that are bursting shrapnel. For another hour or so we maintain our speed until our objective is nearly reached. A few minutes later and we have arrived.

Almost at the same moment, from far away vivid flashes of yellow light appear on the horizon, and the quiet morning air vibrates with the dull thudding of gunfire. One's first thought is that the shore batteries have already spotted us against the glowing dawn and have begun firing, but a glance at the compass shows this to be impossible, as the shore runs East and West and the firing comes from the North East. And indeed, with glasses we can make out the hulls of ships that by a curious effect of mirage have the appearance of tall houses on

land. (We learned afterwards that this was the action in which Commodore Tyrwhitt's forces sank one German destroyer and badly damaged another, and in fact we could ourselves see one ship aflame not four miles from us).

But this is evidently a side show, and one in which we have no part, for our own dispositions and evolutions are carried out as calmly and methodically as if nothing were happening. And at last all is complete, and with a terrific roar the monitor nearest to us fires her first shot. There is something indescribably impressive about a big gun firing. A slow, deliberate elevation of the great snout, a long pause, a belching cloud of smoke and yellow flame, and nearly a ton of metal is screeching through the air on its long journey. Before the fifth shot has been fired a column of spray shoots up not a hundred yards from us, and then a volume of smoke rolls down like a pall and we can see nothing but the occasional flash of the nearest monitor's fifteen-inch.

But if one cannot see, one can hear, and in the intervals between the deafening concussion of our own guns, one can hear only two distinctly the plaintive "whe-e-e-e" of the enemy shrapnel. And if one could neither see nor hear, one might still know that we are under fire by the continual shivers that run through the boat as a shell that has fallen into the water hits the bottom and explodes.

For a moment the pall of smoke lifts and one catches a glimpse of the sun's red disc heaving itself up over the shining sea, and with it there comes the first warm glow of the summer morning. A light breeze roughens the surface of the water in places, yet leaves long lanes and patches that are unruffled. And overhead are no clouds, but the blue of infinite space. And then the pall of smoke shuts down again.

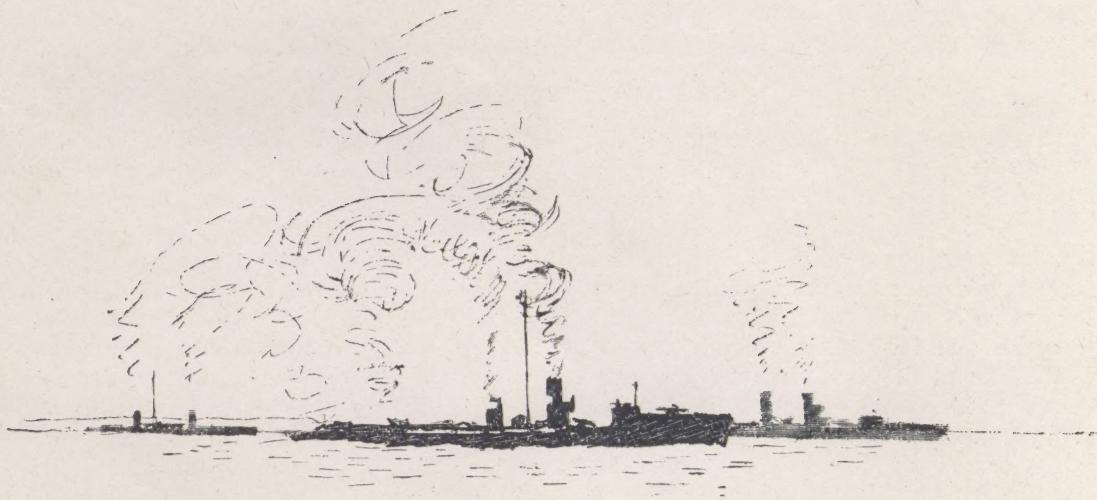
So fresh is it, so quiet and peaceful, that one almost expects to see the white sails of yachts, and only by an effort of the imagination can one realise the lamed and crippled ships that are creeping back, and the ruin and havoc ashore. I am afraid ours is singularly unlike the

actions one reads of in boys' books. We use no cutlasses, not even pistols. Not only cannot we see the enemy, we even cannot see one another. And the oily hand-to-hand combat that was told of afterwards concerned two vessels who espied at the same time a fine fish which had been temporarily stunned by a shell. These closed (the story goes) and although both of British nationality, fought fiercely with boathooks for possession of the prize.

And so, unhurried and methodical, the bombardment goes on, until the pre-arranged programme has been completed. That done, and the signal to retire given, we once more perform our evolutions and withdraw, thanking God that we may once more breathe pure air and carry on conversations that are not punctuated

with the shattering roar of the fifteen inch.

For this day at least, our work is done. Presently will be issued the usual modest Admiralty report and we shall hear our dear, heterogeneous crowd referred to as "our Naval Forces" and perhaps if we are lucky, the little, bespectacled journalists of Fleet Street will pat us on the back and tell us we have done well, and bestow on us their approval. They will qualify their praise a little of course, but that will be lest we should feel unduly elated. And dearest thought of all, whilst we jog leisurely homewards certain rueful persons in long, grey overcoats and spiked helmets will be viewing the not inconsiderable results of our morning's work with pardonable irritation.



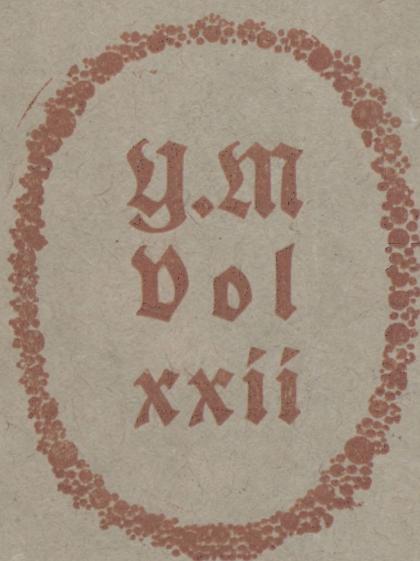
Lamed and Crippled Ships.

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